Vincent van Gogh

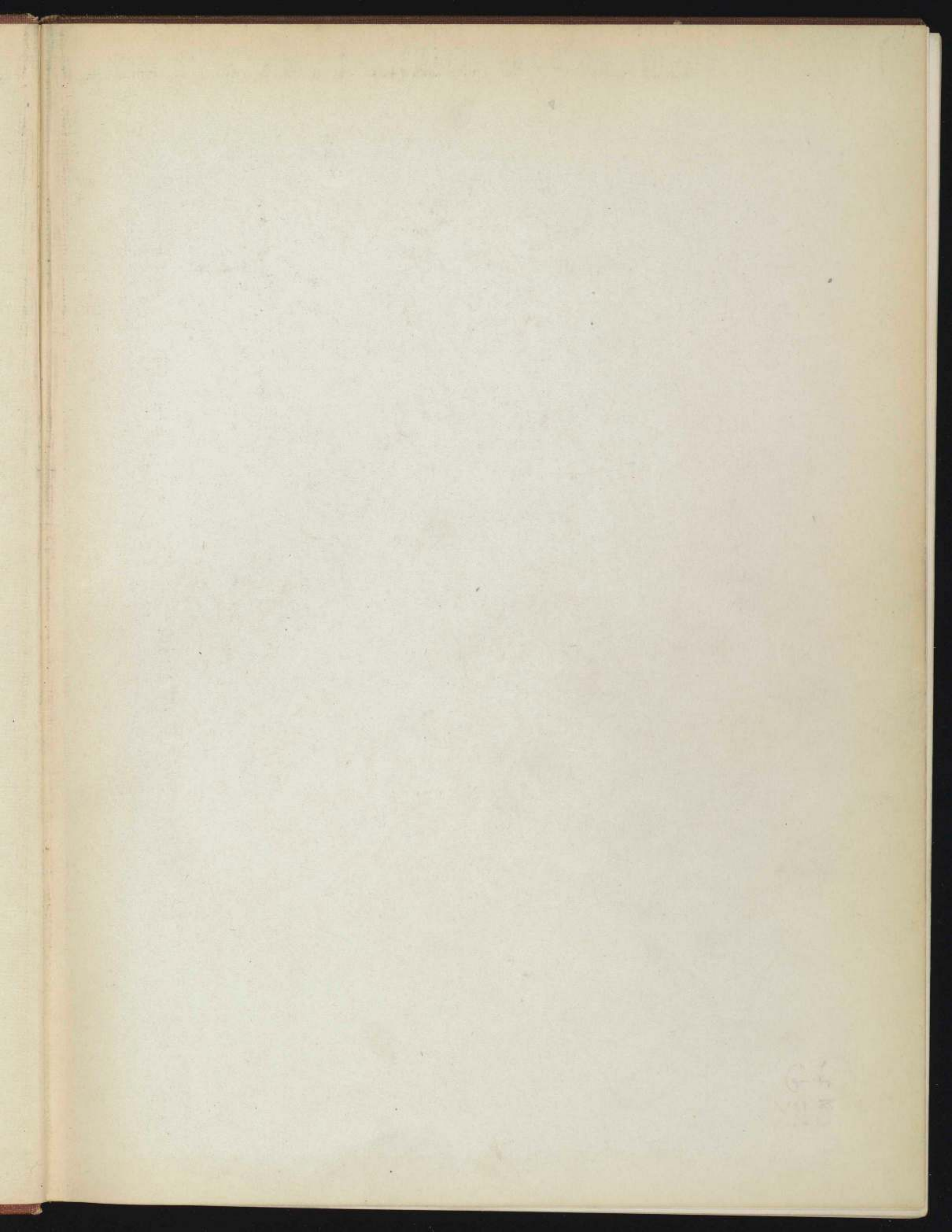
With an introduction and notes selected from the letters of the artist, edited by Alfred H. Barr



Vincent van Gogh

EDITED BY ALFRED H. BARR, JR., THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK


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Vincent van Gogh



39. ***L'Arlésienne*** **(Mme. Ginoux). The Adolph Lewisohn Collection. New York.**

Vincent van Gogh

With an introduction and notes selected from the letters of the artist, edited by Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Dedicated to the memory of

Theo van Gogh, 1857-1891

From Vincent to Theo:

The love between brothers is a strong support through life, that is an old truth, let us look for that support, may experience strengthen the bond between us, and let us be true and outspoken toward each other, let there be no secrets—as it is now.

Etten, Spring, 1877 (*letter* 90)

But you know, don't you, that I consider you *to have saved my life. I* shall never forget that. . . . Money can be repaid, not kindness such as yours.

Nuenen, Dec., 1883 (*letter* 346)

I repeat, let us paint as much as we can and be productive, and *be ourselves with all our faults and qualities;* I say *us,* because the money from you, which I know costs you trouble enough to procure me, gives you the right, when there is some good in my work, to consider half of it your creation. *Nuenen, Spring,* 1885 (*letter* 399)

You will have gone on being poor all the time in order to support me, but I will give you back the money or give up the ghost. . . .

Indeed as long as the world lasts, so long will there be artists and picture dealers, especially those who like you are at the same time apostles.

Arles, Jan., 1889 (*letter* 574)

All your kindnesses to me, they seemed to me greater than ever today. I can't put it in words the way I feel it, but I assure you that that kindness has been good metal, and if you do not see any results from it, my dear, don't fret about that; your own goodness abides. *Arles, Apr.* 21, 1889 (*letter* 585)

Well, the truth is, we can only make our pictures speak. But yet, my dear brother, there is this that I have always told you, and I repeat it once more, with all earnestness . . . that I shall always consider that you are something other than a simple dealer in Corot, that through my mediation you have a part in the actual production of some canvases, which even in the deluge will retain their place.

Well, my own work, I am risking my life for it and my reason has half-foundered in it—that is all right—but you are not among the dealers in men so far as I know, and you can still choose your side, I think, acting with humanity, but what's the use?

Auvers, Summer, 1890 (*letter* 652, *found on him July 29th after he had shot himself*)

Contents

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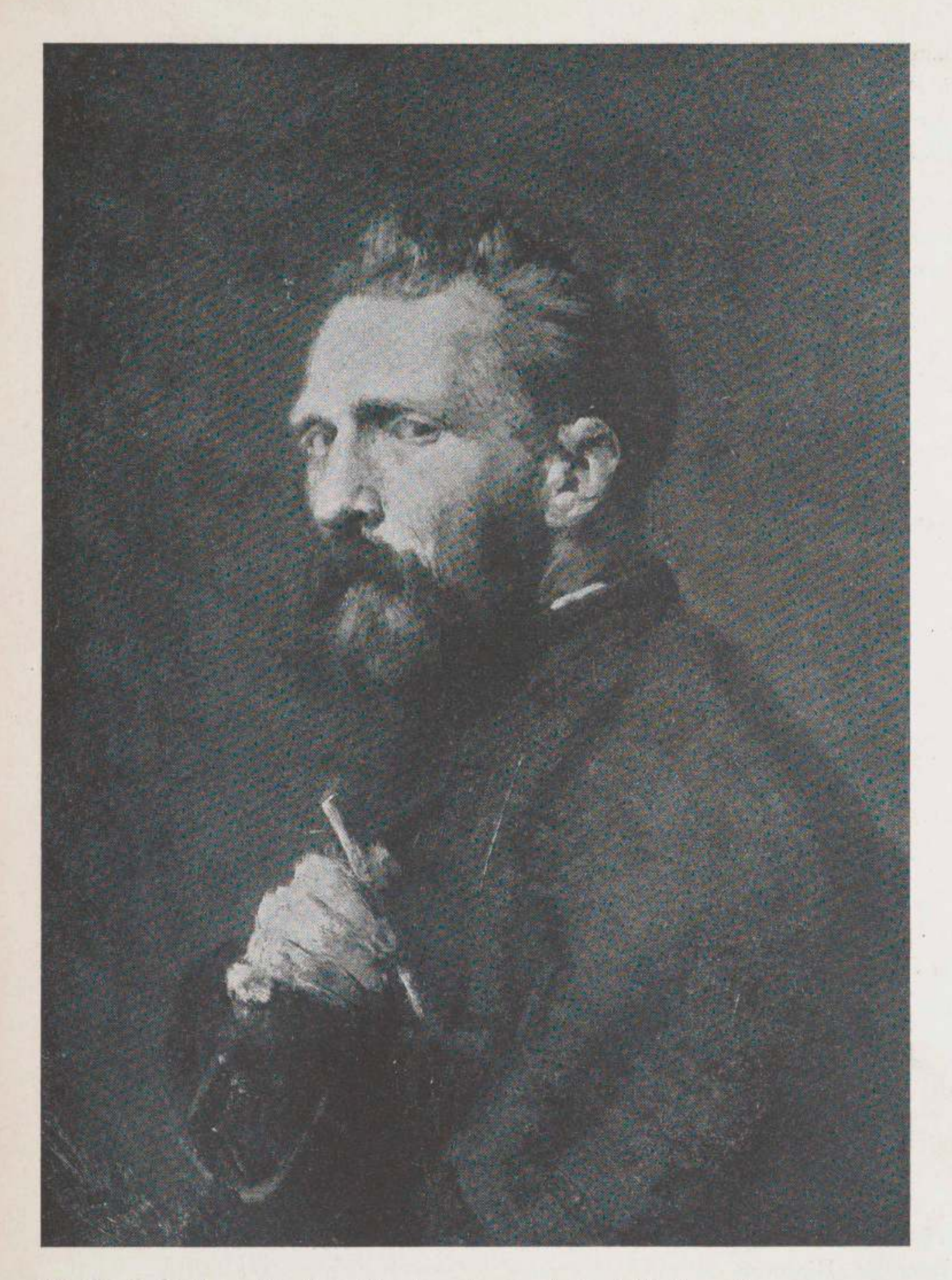
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In preparing the catalog, the *Catalogue Raisonné* of van Gogh's works by J. B. de la Faille has been invaluable. The catalogue of works by van Gogh from the Kröller-Müller Foundation exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1930, suggested the genealogy.

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The catalog section, the bibliography, and other lists are largely the work of Miss Dorothy C. Miller of the Museum staff. Miss Ernestine M. Fantl of the Museum Publications Department has designed the format and seen the book through the press. Miss Alice Mallette and Miss Margaret Scolari have assisted in preparing material and proof reading.

Trustees



67. Portrait of van Gogh by the American painter J. P. Russell.
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam.

"*...keep carefully my portrait by Russell that I am so fond of.*" (To Theo, letter 604)

Vincent van Gogh

Excerpts from the letters of the artist.*

Van Gogh's Life: ambition, purpose, trial and error

As picture dealer with Goupil and Co., The Hague, London, Paris.

I am sure you will like it, it is such a fine business. . . . I am so glad that we shall both be in the same profession [art dealing] and in the same firm.

(The Hague, Dec. 13, 1872, letter 2)

Don't regret that your life is too easy, mine is rather easy too; I think that life is pretty long and that the time will arrive soon enough in which another "shall gird thee and lead thee where thou wouldst not."

(London, Mar. 6, 1875, letter 23)

Let us ask that our part in life should be to become the poor in the kingdom of God, God's servants. We are still far from it; let us pray that our eye may become single and then our whole body shall be full of light.

(Paris, Sept. 17, 1875, letter 38)

. . . Father wrote to me once, "Do not forget the story of Icarus, who wanted to fly to the sun and arrived at a certain height, lost his wings and dropped into the sea." (Paris, Oct. 14, 1875, letter 43)

As school teacher and lay preacher near London.

. . . If I should find something it will probably be a position between clergyman and missionary in the suburbs of London among the working people. Do not speak to anybody about it yet. (Welwyn, June 17, 1876, letter 69)

* Unless otherwise indicated the excerpts are from *The Letters of Vincent van Gogh to his Brother, 1872-1886*, two volumes, 1927 and *Further Letters of Vincent van Gogh to his Brother, 1886-1889*, 1929, published, in the English translation, by Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston and New York, and Constable & Co. Ltd., London. These three volumes contain numerous reproductions of sketches in the letters and valuable memoirs by the late widow of Theo van Gogh, Mme. Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, and by their son, Eng. V. W. van Gogh. The quotations give a mere inkling of the richness of these three volumes. They form a revelatory and moving document which should be read by every student of van Gogh or of the pathos of genius. Acknowledgment and thanks for permission to quote are rendered the American publishers. Excerpts marked "Letter to Bernard" are from *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, with important prefaces by M. Bernard, published by Ambroise Vollard, Paris 1911.—*Ed.*

Theo, your brother has preached for the first time last Sunday in God's dwelling . . . it is a delightful thought that in the future wherever I shall come I shall preach the gospel; to do that *well*, one must have the gospel in one's heart, may the Lord give it to me. (Isleworth, autumn, 1876, letter 79)

Text: Psalm 119:19. I am a stranger on the earth, hide not Thy commandments from me.

Are we what we dreamt we should be? No, but still the sorrows of life . . . , so much more numerous than we expected, the tossing to and fro in the world, they have covered it over, but it is not dead, it sleepeth.

(From van Gogh's first sermon, autumn, 1876)

As salesman in a book shop, Dordrecht.

. . . It is my fervent prayer and desire that the spirit of my father and grandfather may rest upon me, and that it may be given me to become a Christian and a Christian laborer. . . . (March 22, 1877, letter 89)

As student, Amsterdam.

. . . May God give me the wisdom which I need and grant me what I so fervently desire, that is, to finish my studies as quickly as possible and be ordained, so that I can perform the practical duties of a clergyman.

(Nov. 19, 1877, letter 113)

. . . Now I am studying, though it may cost a little more, *it must be done well . . . it is a race and a fight for my life*, no more and no less.

(Nov. 25, 1877, letter 114)

. . . One sometimes gets the feeling: where am I, what am I doing, where am I going?—and one's brain reels. . . . (Dec. 9, 1877, letter 116)

As evangelist in Belgium.

. . . Now there is in the south of Belgium, in Hainault, in the neighborhood of Mons . . . a district called the Borinage, that has a peculiar population of laborers who work in the numerous coal mines. . . .

I should very much like to go there as an evangelist. . . . St. Paul was three years in Arabia before he began to preach. . . .

(Laeken, near Brussels, Nov. 15, 1878, letter 126)

. . . I have already spoken in public several times . . . in the miners' cottages.

. . . If with God's blessing I might get a permanent appointment here I shall be very, very happy. (Petites Wasmes, Borinage, Dec. 26, 1878, letter 127)

. . . You would also be mistaken if you thought that I would do well to follow your advice literally, of becoming an engraver of bill-headings and visiting cards, or a bookkeeper or a carpenter's apprentice,—or else to devote myself to the baker's trade,—or many similar things . . . that other people advise me.
(Wasmes, October 15, 1879, letter 132)

When I was . . . in the surroundings of pictures and things of art . . . I then had a violent passion for them. . . . And I do not repent it, for even now, *far from that land, I am often homesick for the land of pictures.*

Now for more than five years already, I do not know exactly how long, I'm more or less without employment, wandering here and there. . . .

But you will ask what is your definite aim? That aim becomes more definite, will stand out slowly and surely, as the rough draft becomes a sketch and the sketch becomes a picture. . . .

So you must not think that I disavow things; I am rather faithful in my unfaithfulness, and though changed, I am the same, and my only anxiety is: how can I be of use in the world, cannot I serve some purpose and be of any good, how can I learn more and study profoundly certain subjects? . . . one feels an emptiness where there might be friendship and strong and serious affections, and one feels a terrible discouragement knawing at one's very moral energy, and a flood of disgust rises to choke one. And one exclaims "how long my God!"

. . . I know that I might be quite a different man! How then can I be useful, of what service can I be! There is something inside me, what can it be!
(Cuesmes, July 1880, letter 133)

. . . In spite of everything I shall rise again, I will take up my pencil, which I have forsaken in my great discouragement, and I will go on with my drawing; and from that moment everything seems transformed for me.
(Cuesmes, Sept. 24, 1880, letter 136)

As art student, Brussels.

. . . by going on drawing those types of working people, etc., I hope to arrive at the point of being able to do illustration work for papers and books.
(January 1881, letter 140)

. . . I shall make a living by it. For a good draftsman can certainly find work

nowadays, and such persons are in great demand, and there are positions that are very well paid. (February 16, 1881, letter 141)

As art student, The Hague.

How will it be with my work a year hence? Well, Mauve [van Gogh's cousin and teacher] understands all this and he will give me as much technical advice as he can,—that which fills my head and my heart must be expressed in drawing or pictures. (Dec. 1881, letter 166)

Believe me, I work, I drudge, I grind all day long and I do so with pleasure, but I should get very much discouraged if I could not go on working as hard or even harder.

. . . I feel, Theo, that there is a power within me, and I do what I can to bring it out and free it. It is hard enough, all the worry and bother with my drawings, and if I had too many other cares and could not pay the models I should lose my head. (Jan. 1882, letter 171)

Of course I should be very happy to sell a drawing but I am happier still when a real artist like Weissenbruch says about an unsalable??? study or drawing: "That is true to nature, I could work from that myself."

(Feb. 1882, letter 177)

You know what I want: just enough to live on, but for more than that I do not care. What I should like best would be to have fixed weekly wages like any laborer, for which I would work with all my strength and energy.

Being a laborer I feel at home in the laboring class, and more and more I will try to live and take root there. (April 1882, letter 194)

Now, such an enterprise as would be the drawing and printing [by lithography] of a series of, for instance, thirty pages of types of workmen, a sower, a digger, a woodcutter, a plowman, a washwoman, then also a child's cradle or a man from the almshouse—well, the whole immeasurable field lies open, there are plenty of beautiful subjects—

I should think the following would be the best way: as it is useful and necessary that Dutch drawings are made, printed, and spread, destined for the houses of workmen, a few persons should unite in order to use their full strength for this end. (Autumn 1882, letter 249)

And my intention is to try to form a collection of many such things, which would not be quite unworthy of the title "heads of the people."

By working hard, boy, I hope to succeed in making something good. It isn't there yet, but I aim at it, and struggle for it. I want something serious,—something fresh—something with soul in it! Forward—forward—

(Jan. 3, 1883, letter 257)

Boughton together with Abbey are making for Harper in New York drawings called "Picturesque Holland" . . . now I say to myself if the Graphic and Harper send their draughtsmen to Holland they would perhaps not be unwilling to accept a draughtsman from Holland, if he can furnish some good work for not too much money.

I should prefer to be accepted on regular monthly wages rather than to sell a drawing now and then at a relatively high price.

(Summer 1883, letter 288)

My intention is to make in Drenthe so much progress in painting that when I come back I may be qualified for the Society of Draughtsmen [a group of London illustrators]. This stands again in connection with the second plan of going to England [to become an illustrator]. (Summer 1883, letter 319)

As painter, in Drenthe, at Nuenen and Antwerp.

As I feel a need to speak out frankly, I cannot hide from you that I am overcome by a feeling of great care, depression, a "je ne sais quoi" of discouragement and despair more than I can tell.

I take it so much to heart that I do not get on better with people in general; it quite worries me because on it depends so much my success in carrying out my work. (Drenthe, Autumn 1883, letter 328)

And *my* aim in *my* life is to make picture and drawings, as many and as well as I can, then, at the end of my life, I hope to pass away, looking back with love and tender regret, and thinking: "Oh, pictures I might have made!"

Theo, I declare I prefer to think how arms, legs, head are attached to the trunk, rather than whether I myself am or am not more or less an artist.

(Drenthe, Autumn 1883, letter 338)

When I call myself a peasant painter, that is a real fact, and it will become more and more clear to you in the future, I feel at home there.

By witnessing peasant life continually at all hours of the day I have become so absorbed in it that I hardly ever think of anything else.

(Nuenen, Summer 1885, letter 400)

. . . How glad I was when this doctor took me for an ordinary workingman and said: "I suppose you are an iron worker." That is just what I have tried to change in myself; when I was younger, I looked like one who has been intellectually overwrought, and now I look like a skipper or an iron worker.

(Antwerp, Dec. 28, 1885, letter 442)

As painter in Paris.

And at times already I feel old and broken. . . . To succeed one must have ambition, and ambition seems to me absurd. What will come of it I don't know; I would like above all things to be less of a burden to you—. . . . I hope to make such progress that you will be able to show my stuff boldly without compromising yourself.

And then I will take myself off somewhere down south, to get away from the sight of so many painters that disgust me as men.

(Near Paris, Summer 1887, letter 462)

At Arles.

. . . I am not working for myself alone, I believe in the absolute necessity for a new art of color, of design, and—of the artistic life. . . .

(Spring 1888, letter 469)

After the crisis which I went through coming down here I can make no plans nor anything, I am decidedly better now, but *hope*, the *desire to succeed* is gone, and I work *because I must*, so as not to suffer too much mentally, so as to distract my mind. (Summer 1888, letter 513)

. . . I am always between two currents of thought, first the material difficulties, turning round and round to make a living; and second, study of color. I am always in hope of making a discovery there, to express the love of two lovers by a marriage of two complementary colors, their mingling and their opposition, the mysterious vibrations of kindred tones. To express the thought of a brow by the radiance of a light tone against a sombre background.

To express hope by some star, the eagerness of a soul by a sunset radiance. Certainly there is nothing in that of stereoscopic realism, but is it not something that actually exists? (September 1888, letter 531)

. . . I feel so strongly that both you and I are not in our decadence, nor done for yet, nor shall we be in the end. (September 1888, letter 539)

This art that we are all working in, we feel it has a long future before it, and one must have some settled base, like steady people, and not like decadents.

Here my life will become more and more like a Japanese painter's, living close to nature like a petty tradesman. (Autumn 1888, letter 540)

Look here—you do know that what I am trying to do is to get back the money that my training as a painter has cost, neither more nor less. . . . I have a right to that, and a wage for my daily bread. . . . To talk of money distresses us so much. . . . Let it go to your wife's hands, who will join with us besides in working with the artists. (January 23, 1889, letter 573)

I . . . took your letter for the head of the asylum at St. Rémy . . . , at the end of the week I hope it will be fixed up. For myself I shouldn't be unhappy or discontented if some time from now I could enlist in the Foreign Legion for 5 years (they take one up to forty, I think). (April 28, 1889, letter 587)

At St. Rémy.

We must work as much and with as few pretensions as a peasant, if we want to last. (Autumn 1889, letter 615)

At Auvers.

Well, my own work, I am risking my life for it and my reason has half foundered in it—that's all right—

(Letter 652, letter found on him after he had shot himself, July 29, 1890)

Health: Physical and Mental

The Hague.

What I had already feared when I wrote you last has already happened, meaning that I have not been well, and I have been in bed for almost three days with fever and nervousness . . . but I am so angry with myself now because I cannot do what I should like to do. (Feb. 1882, letter 173)

Involuntarily and without any definite motive, I had a thought that often occurs to me. Not only did I begin drawing relatively late in life, but it may also be that I shall not live for so very many years to come. . . . I think I may presume without rashness: that my body will keep a certain number of years "quand bien même"—a certain number, say between six and ten years for instance. . . . This is the period on which I reckon firmly.

(Summer 1883, letter 309, about seven years before his death)

Antwerp.

You see I am not stronger than other people in so far that if I neglected myself too much, it would be the same thing with me as with so *many* painters (so very many if one thinks about it), I should catch my death, or worse still—become crazy or an idiot. (Feb. 1886, letter 448)

. . . I went to live in my studio on the first of May. . . . I have not had a hot dinner more than perhaps six or seven times since.

I have lived *then* and I do so here, not having money for dinner, because the work costs me too much and I have trusted too much on my being strong enough to hold out.

Now I have made it worse by smoking a great deal, which I do the more because then one does not feel an empty stomach so much. . . . My opinion is that one must not think that the people whose health is damaged, *quite* or partly, are no good for painting. . . .

It fell so unexpectedly on me, I had been feeling weak and feverish, but I went on notwithstanding, but I began to feel worried when more and more teeth broke off, and I began to look more and more ill. (Feb. 1886, letter 449)

Arles.

I was certainly going the right way for a stroke when I left Paris. I paid for it nicely afterwards! When I stopped drinking, when I stopped smoking so much, when I began again to think instead of trying not to think—good Lord, the depression and the prostration of it! Work in these magnificent natural surroundings has helped my morale. (May 4, 1888, letter 481)

I have lived principally for these four days on twenty-three cups of coffee, with bread which I still have to pay for. It is not your fault, it is mine if it is anyone's because I was wild to see my pictures in frames, and I had ordered too many for my budget, seeing that the month's rent and the charwoman had to be paid as well. (Oct. 1888, letter 546)

I hope I have just had simply an artist's freak, and then a lot of fever after very considerable loss of blood, as an artery was severed, but my appetite came back at once. My digestion is all right, and so from day to day serenity returns to my brain. (Jan. 1889, letter 569 [about two weeks after his first attack during which he had cut off his own ear])

. . . I did not know that you could fracture the brain in your head and recover after that too.

Since it is winter still, look here, leave me to go quietly on with my work; if it is that of a madman, well, so much the worse. I can't help it.

And once again either shut me up right away in a madhouse—I shan't oppose it in case I am deceiving myself—or else let me work with all my strength. . . . (Jan. 28, 1889, letter 574)

When I came out of the hospital with kind old Roulin I thought that there had been nothing wrong with me, but *afterwards* I felt I had been ill. Well, well, there are moments when I am wrung by enthusiasm or madness or prophecy like a Greek oracle on a tripod.

. . . Everyone suffers here either from fever, or hallucination, or madness, we understand each other like members of the same family.

(Feb. 3, 1889, letter 576)

. . . Here I am shut up for the livelong day under lock and key and with keepers in a cell. . . .

I will not deny that I would rather have died than have caused and suffered such trouble. (March 19, 1889, letter 579 [after third attack])

Certainly after all you are right, damn well right—even making allowance for hope, the thing is to accept the probably disastrous reality. I am hoping to throw myself once again wholly in my work which has got behind hand.

(Mar. 29, 1889, letter 582)

. . . At the end of the month I should like to go to the hospital at St. Rémy or another institution of this kind.

What comforts me a little, is that I am beginning to consider madness as a disease like any other and accept the thing as such, whereas during the crises themselves, I thought that everything I imagined was real.

. . . After all . . . I have perhaps still some almost normal years in front of me. (Apr. 21, 1889, letter 585)

St. Rémy.

. . . I have done well to come here, first of all that by seeing the actual *truth* about the life of the various madmen and lunatics in this menagerie I am losing the vague dread, the fear of the thing. (May 1889, letter 591)

Formerly I felt repulsion for these creatures, and it was a harrowing thought for me to reflect that so many of our profession, Troyon, Marchal, Méryon, Jundt, M. Maris, Monticelli, and heaps more had ended like this.

(May 25, 1889, letter 592)

. . . I am terribly distressed that the attacks have come back.

When I was already beginning to hope that it would not return.

. . . This new attack, my boy, came on me in the fields and when I was in the midst of painting, on a windy day. I will send you the canvas. I finished it in spite of it. (July 1889, letter 601)

. . . It is very expensive here, and then just now I am afraid of the other patients.

Perhaps I exaggerate in my wretchedness at having been again bowled over by my illness—but I am sort of afraid. (August? 1889, letter 602)

Ill as well, and I have not been brave. Then face to face with the suffering of these attacks I feel very frightened too, and I do not know if my zeal is anything different from what I said, it is like someone who meant to commit suicide and finding the water too cold, struggles to regain the bank.

. . . All the same I know well that healing comes—if one is brave—from within through profound resignation to suffering and death, through the surrender of your own will and of your self-love. But that is no use to me, I love to paint, to see people and things and everything that makes our life—artificial—if you like. (Sept. 10, 1889, letter 605)

I feel now quite normal and do not remember the bad days at all. (Autumn 1889, letter 608)

My surroundings here begin to weigh on me more than I can express—my word, I have had patience for more than a year—I need air, I feel overwhelmed with boredom and depression. (May 1890, letter 631)

Auvers.

For myself I can only say at the moment that I think we all need rest—I feel done for. So much for me: I feel that this is the lot which I accept and which will not alter.

. . . And the prospect grows darker, I see no happy future at all. (July 1890, letter 648)

"K" and "Christine"

The Hague.

When I look back in the past I always hurt myself against the same never quite cleared-up fatal facts which occurred in the months August 1881 to February 1882. (Summer 1883, letter 312)

To express my feelings for K. I said resolutely: "She, and no other." And her "No, never, never" was not strong enough to make me give her up. I still had hope, and my love remained alive, notwithstanding this refusal which I considered as a piece of ice that would melt. But I could find no rest. It was a strain that became unbearable because she always kept silent and I never received a word in answer.

Then I went to Amsterdam. There they told me: "When you are in the house, K. leaves it. To your 'she, and no other' she answers, 'He, certainly not.' Your persistence is *disgusting.*" I put my hand in the flame of the lamp and said: "Let me see her for as long as I can keep my hand in the flame", and no wonder that Tersteeg perhaps noticed my hand afterwards. But I think they put out the lamp and said: "You shall not see her." Well, that was too much for me, and I felt . . . that my "She, and no other" had been killed.

Then, not at once, but very soon I felt that love die within me, a void, an infinite void came in its stead. You know I believe in God, I did not doubt the power of love, but then I felt something like: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" and everything became a blank. I thought: have I been deceiving myself. . . . "O! God there is no God."

. . . Then after I had been thrown over by Mauve [his cousin and teacher] and had been ill for a few days, towards the end of January, I met Christine.

(Summer 1882, letter 193)

Well, gentlemen, I will tell you, you who prize good manners and culture, and rightly so if only it be the true kind, which is the more delicate, refined, manly, to desert a woman or to stand by a forsaken woman?

This winter I met a pregnant woman [Christine] deserted by the man whose child she bore.

A pregnant woman who in winter had to walk the streets, had to earn her bread, you understand how.

I took that woman for a model, and have worked with her all the winter. I could not pay her the full wages of a model, but that did not prevent my paying her rent, and, thank God, I have been able thus far to protect her and her child from hunger and cold, by sharing my own bread with her. . . .

It seems to me that every man worth his salt would have done the same in a similar case.

What I did was so simple and natural, that I thought I could keep it to myself.

(Summer 1882, letter 192)

Impressions of Places

Paris.

It seems to me almost impossible to work in Paris unless one has some place of retreat where one can revive oneself and get back one's tranquility and poise. Without that one would get hopelessly brutalized.

(Arles, Feb. 21, 1888, letter 463)

Arles.

But, old chap, you know I feel I am in Japan—I say no more than that, and yet I have not seen anything yet in its usual splendor.

(Spring 1888, letter 469)

. . . Nature here is so *extraordinarily* beautiful. Everywhere and over all the vault of the sky is a marvelous blue, and the sun sheds a radiance of pale sulphur, and it is soft and as lovely as the combination of heavenly blues and yellows in a Van der Meer [Vermeer] at Delft. I cannot paint it as lovely as it is, but it absorbs me so much that I let myself go, never thinking of a single rule.

(Sept. 1888, letter 539)

Here, under a stronger sun, I have found true what Pissarro said, and what Gauguin wrote to me as well, the simplicity, the lack of color, the gravity of great sunlight effects.

(Oct. 1888, letter 555)

St. Rémy.

And though here you continually hear terrible cries and howls like beasts in a menagerie, in spite of that people get to know each other very well and help each other when their attacks come on.

(May 9, 1889, letter 591 [to Theo's wife])

The room where we stay on wet days is like a third class waiting room in some dead-alive village, the more as there are some distinguished lunatics who always wear a hat, spectacles, and cane, and traveling cloak, like at a bathing resort. Almost, and they represent the passengers.

(May 25, 1889, letter 592)

Outside the cicadas are singing fit to burst . . . and the burnt-up grass takes on lovely tones of old gold. And the beautiful towns of the south are in the state of our dead towns along the Zuyderzee that once were astir. Yet in the decline and decadence of things, the cicadas dear to the good Socrates abide. And here certainly they still sing in ancient Greek. . . .

(July 5, 1889, letter 599)

Art and Technique

Amsterdam.

When I am writing I instinctively make a little drawing now and then like the one I sent you lately, and for instance, this morning, Elijah in the Desert. . . . (June 12, 1877, letter 101 [while studying for theological school])

The Borinage.

Often I am drawing until late in the night to keep some souvenirs. . . .
(Cuesmes, Aug. 5, 1879, letter 131)

I must tell you that I am busy copying large drawings after Millet.
(Cuesmes, Aug. 20, 1880, letter 134)

I hope that after having copied the other two series of Bargue ["Cours de Dessins" and "Exercices au Fusain"] I shall be able to draw miners, male and female, more or less well. (Cuesmes, Sept. 7, 1880, letter 135)

. . . I am in a rage of work, but for the moment it does not give very brilliant results. . . . First the pain, then the joy. (Cuesmes, Sept. 24, 1880, letter 136)

Brussels.

Please look out for all possible prints or books on proportion and gather as much information about them as you can. (Feb. 4, 1881, letter 142)

Etten.

I bought Cassagne: "Traité d'aquarelle" and am studying it; even if I should not make any watercolors I shall probably find many things in it, for instance, about sepia and ink. (Spring 1881, letter 146)

. . . There has come a change in my drawing, in my technique as well as in its results. . . . I do not stand helpless before nature any longer as I used to do.
(Aug. 1881, letter 150)

I said to Mauve: Do you approve of my coming here for a month or so and troubling you for some advice now and then, after that time I will have overcome the first petites misères of painting. . . .

Well, Mauve at once set me down before a still life of a pair of old wooden shoes and some other objects, and so I could set to work. (Dec. 1881, letter 162)

. . . So it is now a settled thing that I shall begin to paint and I am glad things have come so far. (Dec. 1881, letter 165)

The Hague.

It is a wonderful thing to draw a human being, something that lives, it is confoundedly difficult, but after all it is splendid.

When I draw separate figures it is always with a view to a composition with more figures, for instance a third class waiting room, a pawn shop, or an interior. (Mar. 3, 1882, letter 178)

When I see a young painter compose and draw from memory . . . it sometimes disgusts me.

Now it sometimes happens to me too that I sit and improvise, so to say, at random on a piece of paper, but I do not attach any more value to this than to a rag or to a cabbage leaf. (July 31, 1882, letter 221)

. . . I feel the power of color in me while painting that I did not possess before. Things have broadness and strength.

It is now just two years since I began to draw in the Borinage.

(Aug. 15, 1882, letter 225)

. . . How I paint *I do not know myself*. I sit down with a white board before the spot that strikes me, I look at what is before me, I say to myself that white board must become something, I come back dissatisfied—I put it away, and when I have rested a little I go to look at it with a kind of fear. Then I am still dissatisfied, because I have still too closely in my mind that splendid nature. . . .

(Summer 1882, letter 228)

I consider the making of studies as sowing, and the making of painted pictures as reaping.

Sometimes I am longing for the harvest time that means for the time when I shall be so imbued with the study of nature that I myself shall create something in a picture. (Autumn 1882, letter 233)

. . . For a few years I have exclusively drudged on the figure, to get some action and structure in it. And through that very drudgery, I had somehow lost the animation to compose and to let the imagination work.

(Spring 1883, letter 287)

I have sometimes wondered that I was not more of a colorist, because my temperament decidedly seems to indicate it. (Summer 1883, letter 309)

Nuenen.

We have been talking a good deal about impressionism—but here in Holland it is rather difficult to find out what impressionism really means.

(Oct. 1884, letter 383)

This is a question of color and what means more to me at the point where I am now is the question of form. I think the best way to express form is with an almost monochrome coloring. . . . (Spring 1885, letter 394)

. . . I hope . . . to paint some in a lighter gamut, more flesh and blood, but, at the same time, I am trying to get a still stronger soft soap and copper-like effect. In reality I daily see, in the gloomy huts, effects against the light or in the evening twilight . . . which I compare to soft soap and brass color of a wornout 10 centime piece. (June 1885, letter 410)

But tell me, *black* and *white*, may they be used or not, are they forbidden fruit?

You . . . think that when the shadows are dark, ay, black, that it is all wrong then, don't you? I don't think so. . . . Rembrandt and Hals, didn't they use black? And Velasquez??? (Autumn 1885, letter 428)

I retain from nature a certain sequence and a correctness in placing the tones, I study nature, so as not to do foolish things. . . . I don't mind so much, whether my color is exactly the same, as long as it looks beautiful on my canvas, as beautiful as it looks in nature. (Autumn 1885, letter 429)

I am absolutely preoccupied by the laws of color. If only they had taught them us in our youth. . . . The laws of color which Delacroix was the first to regulate and to bring to light . . . for the general use. (Nov. 4, 1885, letter 430)

Arles.

Of all the colors I ordered: the three chromes, the Prussian blue, the emerald, the crimson lakes, the malachite green, all the orange lead, hardly one of them is to be found on the Dutch palette, in Maris, in Mauve or Israëls.

(Spring 1888, letter 476)

I am just now dissatisfied with myself and dissatisfied with what I do, but I have just a glimmer of hope that I am going to do better in the end.

(Summer 1888, letter 483)

I have asked for some watercolors because I would like to make some pen drawings, to be covered with a flat wash like the Japanese prints.

(Summer 1888, letter 491)

I must draw a great deal. Things here have so much line. And I want too much to get my drawing more spontaneous, more exaggerated.

(June 1888, letter 495)

Now that I have seen the sea here I am absolutely convinced of the importance of staying in the Midi, and of absolutely piling on, exaggerating the color —Africa not so far away. (Summer 1888, letter 500)

I must warn you that everyone will think I work too fast.

Don't you believe a word of it.

Is it not emotion, the sincerity of one's feeling for nature, that draws us, and if the emotions are sometimes so strong that one works without knowing one works, when sometimes the strokes come with a sequence and a coherence like words in a speech or a letter, then one must remember that it has not always been so, and that in the time to come there will again be heavy days, empty of inspiration.

So one must strike while the iron is hot, and put the forged bars on one side.

(Summer 1888, letter 504)

Often I think of that excellent painter Monticelli, . . . when I come back myself from the mental labor of balancing the six essential colors . . . sheer work and calculation, with one's mind utterly on the stretch, like an actor on the stage in a difficult part, with a hundred things at once to think of in a single half-hour.

Don't think that I would artificially keep up a feverish condition, but do understand that I am in the midst of a complicated calculation which results in quick succession in canvases quickly executed, but calculated long *beforehand.* So now, when anyone says that such and such is done too quickly, you can reply that they have looked at it too quickly. (Summer 1888, letter 507)

All my work is in a way founded on Japanese art. . . . Japanese art, in decadence in its own country, takes root again among the French impressionist artists. (Summer 1888, letter 510)

It is color not locally true from the point of view of the stereoscopic realist, but color to suggest any emotion of an ardent temperament.

When Paul Mantz saw at the exhibition the violent and inspired sketch of

Delacroix . . . the "Barque of Christ"—he turned away from it exclaiming: "I did not know that one could be so terrible with a little blue and green."

Hokusai wrings the same cry from you, but he does it by his *line*, his *drawing*, when you say in your letter—"the waves are *claws* and the ship is caught in them."

Well, if you make the color exact or the drawing exact, it won't give you sensations like that.

(Sept. 8, 1888, letter 533)

Ideas for my work come to me in swarms, so that although solitary I have no time to think or to feel, I go on like a steam engine at painting.

(Autumn 1888, letter 535)

Today from seven o'clock in the morning until six o'clock in the evening I worked without stirring except to eat a bite a step or two away.

Because these colors about me are all new to me, and give me extraordinary exaltation, I have no thought of fatigue, I shall do another picture this very night, and I shall bring it off. (Autumn 1888, letter 541)

I work from memory on bad days, and that would not do if I were alone—Gauguin gives me courage to imagine things and certainly things from the imagination take on a more mysterious character. (Autumn 1888, letter 561)

Now I as a painter shall never stand for anything of importance. I feel it utterly. . . . I sometimes regret I did not simply keep to the Dutch palette with its grey tones, and have brushed away at landscapes of Montmartre with no ado. (May 3, 1889, letter 590)

St. Rémy.

My dear Brother,—I am working like one actually possessed, more than ever I am in a dumb fury of work. . . . Perhaps something will happen to me like what Eug. Delacroix spoke of, "I discovered painting when I had no longer teeth or breath."

What I dream of in my best moments is not so much of striking color effects as once more the half tones. (Sept. 1889, letter 604)

What a queer thing *touch* is, the stroke of the brush.

In the open air, exposed to wind, to sun, to the curiosity of the people, you work as you can, you feel your canvas anyhow. . . . But when after a time you take up again this study and arrange your brush strokes in the direction of the

objects—certainly it is more harmonious and pleasant to look at, and you add whatever you have of serenity and cheerfulness.

(Sept. 10, 1889, letter 605)

"La Vie Bohémienne"

The Hague.

If you became a painter one of the things that would astonish you is that painting and everything connected with it, is really hard work from a physical point of view; besides the mental stress, the worry of mind, it requires a rather great exertion of strength and that day by day. (Spring 1882, letter 182)

To stroll on wharves, and in alleys and in streets and in the houses, waiting-rooms, even saloons, that is not a pleasant pastime *unless for an artist.* As such, one would rather be in the dirtiest place where there is something to draw, than at a tea party with charming ladies. Unless one wants to draw ladies, then a tea party is all right even for an artist. (Spring 1882, letter 190)

One wants to be an honest man, one is so, one works as hard as a slave but still one cannot make both ends meet. . . . One gets a feeling of guilt, of shortcoming, of not keeping one's promises, one is not honest as one would be if the work were paid for at its natural reasonable price. One is afraid of making friends, one is afraid of moving, like one of the old lepers . . . with all that mountain of care on one's heart, one must set to work with a calm everyday face, without moving a muscle, live one's ordinary life, get along with the models, with the man who comes for the rent, with everybody in fact.

(Autumn 1882, letter 248)

Drenthe.

There is a saying by Gustave Doré which I have always admired: "J'ai la patience d'un boeuf." I find in it a certain goodness, a certain resolute honesty, more, it has a deep meaning that saying, it is the word of a real artist. When one thinks of the men from whose heart such a saying sprang, all the arguments one too often hears of art dealers about "natural gifts", seem to become a terrible raven's croaking. (Autumn 1883, letter 336)

Arles(?).

The painters' patron, St. Luke, doctor, painter, evangelist, who—alas—has nothing but an ox for a symbol, is there to give us hope.

(1888, letter 11 to Bernard)

St. Rémy.

We must work as much and with as few pretensions as a peasant, if we want to last. (Autumn 1889, letter 615)

Dealers, Collectors, Critics and Museums

Nuenen.

I am sure that many rich people, who for some reason or other buy expensive pictures, do not do so because of the art value they find in them — for such people the difference which you and I see between a tulip and a picture, is not visible. They, the speculators and "pochards blasés" and many others, would buy tulips now just as formerly, if it were but fashionable.

There are real, serious amateurs, yes, but it is perhaps only a tenth of all business that is transacted, perhaps a much smaller part still, of which can be said that it was really done for love of art. . . . (Dec. 1883, letter 344)

. . . And I do believe if the critics and connoisseurs were much better acquainted with nature their judgment would be more correct than now, when it is the routine only to live in pictures, and to compare them mutually. . . . The most touching things the great masters have painted find their origin in life and reality itself. A basis of sound poetry, which exists eternally as a fact.

(Autumn 1884, letter 393)

I believe the fuller of sentiment the thing one makes is, and the more true to nature, the more it is criticized and the more animosity it raises, but, after all, in the end it gets the better of criticism. (Spring 1885, letter 401)

Supposing I am right, in considering that curious haggling about prices of pictures, more and more like the bulb trade . . . the bulb trade may disappear— the *flower growing* remains. (1885, letter 429)

Antwerp.

It is hard, terribly hard, to keep on working when one does not sell, and one literally has to pay for one's colors from what would not be too much for eating, drinking and lodgings, calculated ever so strictly. And then, besides, the models.

. . . All the same they are building State museums, and the like, for hundreds of thousands, but meanwhile, the artists can go to the dogs.

(Dec. 1885, letter 438)

There must be renovation, for the old systems do not work well any longer. The prices, the public, everything needs renovation, and the future is to work cheaply for the people, because the common amateurs seem to become tight-fisted more and more. . . . (Dec. 19, 1885, letter 441)

Arles.

And has he [Tersteeg of Goupil's at The Hague] taken into account as we have, the resulting depreciation in value of pictures now highly priced, a depreciation that will, I think, probably come as soon as the impressionists' stock rises. You observe that the dealers in expensive pictures ruin themselves by opposing for reasons of policy the advent of a school which for years has shown an energy and perseverance worthy of Millet, Daubigny, and the rest.

(Spring 1888, letter 470)

My dear Brother, if I were not broke and crazy with this blasted painting what a dealer I should make just for the impressionists. But, there, I am broke.

(Summer 1888, letter 513)

Prices

Arles.

In my opinion we must at the lowest reckon his [Seurat's] big pictures of "The Models" and "The Grand Jatte"—well—let me see—say five thousand apiece [about one thousand dollars. "La Grande Jatte" was purchased for the Chicago Art Institute about 1925 for approximately $25,000. In 1930 an offer of over $400,000 from a syndicate of dealers was refused.—*Ed.*]

(Oct. 1888, letter 551)

. . . For instance, if our Monticelli bunch of flowers is worth 500 francs to a collector, and it is, then I dare swear to you that my sunflowers are worth 500 francs too to one of these Scotch or Americans. [Approximately $50,000 has since been paid for one of the many paintings of sunflowers.—*Ed.*]

(Jan. 23, 1889, letter 573)

Auvers.

. . . Still, still, some canvases will one day find purchasers. Only I think that all the talk that has been started by the great prices given of late for Millets, and so forth, has made things still worse, as to the chance one has nearly of getting back one's painting expenses. (June 4, 1890, letter 638)

Society of Artists

Arles.

He [Gauguin] says that when sailors have to move a heavy load or raise an anchor so as to be able to lift a very heavy weight, and to make a huge effort they all sing together to keep them up and give them vim.

That is just what artists lack! (Spring 1888, letter 496)

. . . You know that I think a society of impressionists would be a good thing of the same nature as the Society of the Twelve English Pre-Raphaelites, and I think that it could come into existence. Then I incline to think that the artists would guarantee mutually among themselves a livelihood, each consenting to give a considerable number of pictures to the Society, and that the gains as well as the losses should be taken in common. (Spring 1888, letter 498)

I should not ask anything better, but when it is a question of several painters living in community life, I stipulate before everything that there must be an abbot to keep order, and that would naturally be Gauguin. That is why I would like Gauguin to be here first. . . . If I can get back the money already spent which you have lent me for several years, we will launch out, and try to found a studio for a renaissance and not for a decadence. (Autumn 1888, letter 544)

I do not dare to persuade painters to come here after what has happened to me, they run the risk of losing their wits like me. (Feb. 1889, letter 577)

St. Rémy.

There remains . . . the idea of an association of painters, of lodging them in common . . . though we did not succeed, though it is a deplorable and melancholy failure, the idea is still true and reasonable. . . . (Apr. 1889, letter 586)

Morality and Society

The Hague.

. . . The thought crossed my mind, how society today in its fall, at moments seen against the light of a renewal, stands out as a large, gloomy silhouette.

Yes, for me, the drama of storm in nature, the drama of sorrow in life, is the most impressive. (Summer 1883, letter 319)

Drenthe.

I tell you, brother, I am not good from a clergyman's point of view. I know full well that, frankly speaking, prostitutes are bad, but I feel something human in them which makes me feel not the least scruple to associate with them; I see nothing very wrong in them. . . .

And now, as in other periods of decline of civilization, the corruption of society has turned upside down all relations of good and evil, and one falls back logically on the old saying: "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." (Sept. 1883, letter 326)

Nuenen.

Now I ask you whether you yourself have not often noticed that the policy of floating between the old and the new is not tenable? Just think this over. Sooner or later it ends with one's standing frankly either to the right or to the left.

It is no ditch, and I repeat, then it was '48, now it is '84; then there was a barricade of paving stones—now it is not of stones, but a barricade as to the incompatibility of old and new. . . . (Autumn 1884, letter 381)

It is perfectly true what you say: that if I make good pictures it is more likely I shall achieve something, than by discussing revolutionary questions. (Autumn 1884, letter 384)

Antwerp.

This one thing remains: *faith;* one feels instinctively that many things are changing and that everything will change. We are living in the last quarter of a century which will end again in an enormous revolution . . . we shall certainly not live to see the better times of pure air and the refreshing of the old society after those big storms. . . . We are still in the closeness but the following generations will be able to breathe in freely. (Winter 1886, letter 451)

As well as the greatest optimist I see the lark soaring in the spring air, but I also see a young girl of about twenty, who might have been in good health, a victim to consumption, and who will perhaps drown herself before she dies of an illness.

If one is always in respectable company among rather well-to-do bourgeois one does not notice this so much perhaps, but if one has dined for years on *la vache enragée*, as I did, one cannot deny that great misery is a fact that weighs down the scale. (Winter 1886, letter 453)

Arles.

We shall end by having had enough of cynicism and skepticism and humbug and we shall want to live more musically. . . .

It would be interesting to be able to predict . . . instead of seeing absolutely nothing in the future beyond the disasters that are . . . bound to fall like terrible lightnings on the modern world and all civilization, through a revolution or a war, or the bankruptcy of wormeaten states. If we study Japanese art you see a man who is undoubtedly wise, philosophic and intelligent who spends his time how? In studying the distance between the earth and the moon? No. In studying the policy of Bismarck? No. He studies a single blade of grass.

(Sept. 1888, letter 542)

Religion

. . . Thanks be to God who has given us to be born and to live in a Christian country. . . . God knows us better than we know ourselves, for He made us and not we ourselves. He knows of what things we have need. He knows what is good for us. . . . God helping us, we shall get through life.

(From van Gogh's first sermon, near London,
Autumn 1876, volume I, p. 96)

Cuesmes, Borinage.

. . . the best way to know God is to love many things. Love a friend, a wife, something, whatever you like. . . . But one must love with a lofty and serious intimate sympathy, with strength, with intelligence. . . . That leads to God, that leads to unwavering faith. . . . To give you an example: someone loves Rembrandt, but seriously,—that man will know that there is a God, he will surely believe it.

. . . To try to understand the real significance, of what the great artists, the serious masters, tell us in their masterpieces, *that* leads to God. . . .

(July 1880, letter 133)

Nuenen.

Oh, I am no friend of the present Christianity, though its *founder* was sublime, the present Christianity I know but too well. That icy coldness bewitched me even in my youth. . . . (Autumn 1884, letter 378)

Arles.

I feel more and more that we must not judge God on this world, it is just a study that did not come off. What can you do, in a study that has gone wrong,

if you are fond of the artist—you do not find much to criticize—you hold your tongue. But you have a right to ask for something better. We should have to see other works by the same hand though; this world is evidently botched up in a hurry on one of his bad days . . . it is only a master who can make such a muddle and perhaps that is the best consolation we have out of it, since in that case we have a right to hope that we will see the same creative hand get even with itself . . . we must . . . go on hoping that in some other life we will see a better thing than this. (Spring 1888, letter 490)

Christ alone—among all the philosophers, magicians and so forth—affirmed that eternal life, the infinity of time, the void of death, the necessity and the very reason for serenity and devotion were our principal assurance. He lived serenely *like an artist who was more of an artist than all the others, disdaining marble and clay and color, working in the living flesh.*

And who would dare tell us that He lied when He affirmed, prophesying the fall of the Roman buildings: "Even if heaven and earth will pass away, My words will not pass away."

These spoken words which, like a lord, prodigal of His wealth, He did not even deign to write, are the highest summit ever attained by art, which thus becomes creative force, pure creative power. (1888, letter to Bernard, 11)

. . . It does me good to do difficult things. That does not prevent me having a terrible need of—shall I say the word—of religion. Then I go out at night to paint the stars. . . . (Sept. 1888, letter 543)

Genealogy

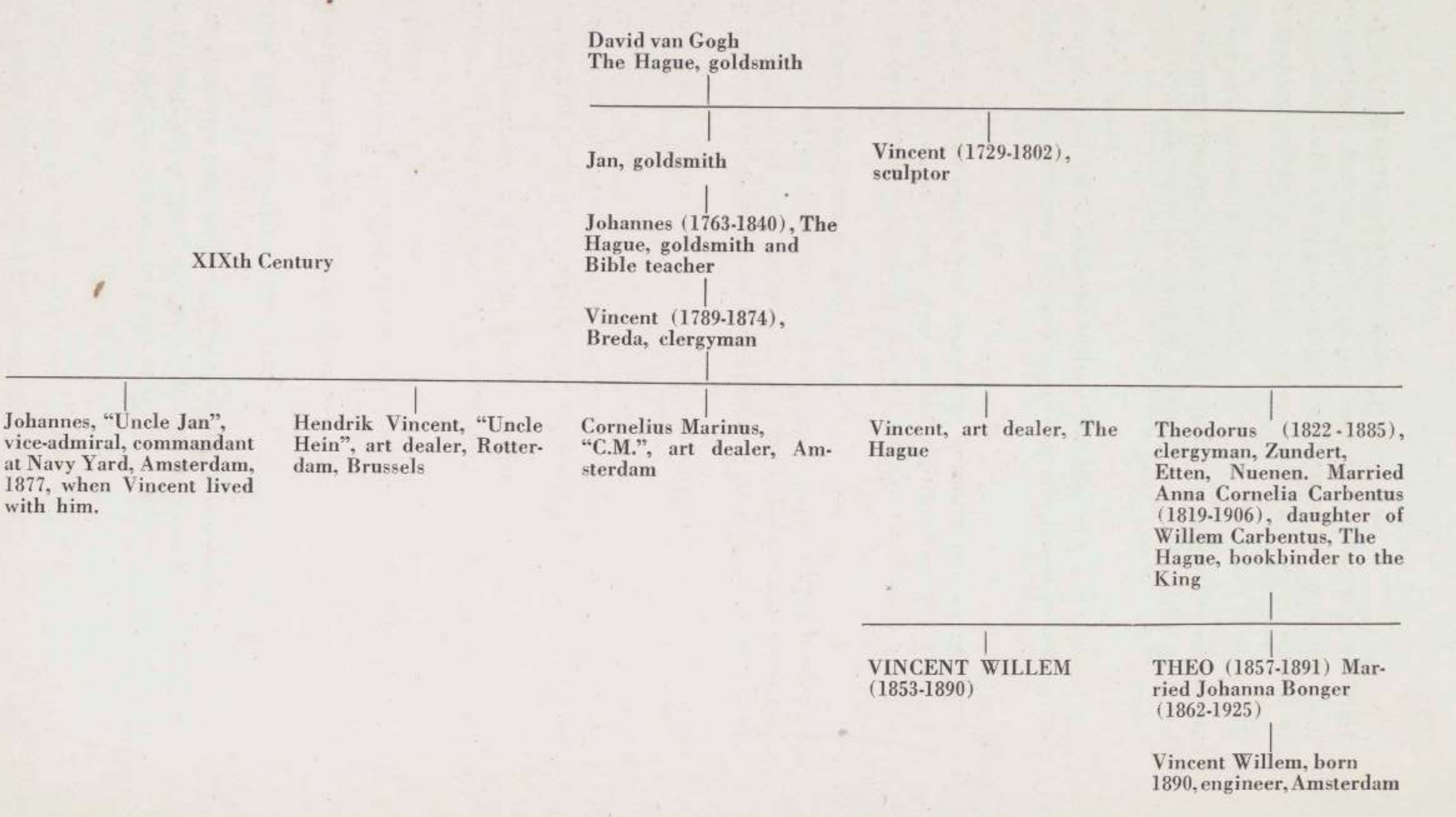
Based upon the introduction by Johanna van Gogh-Bonger to *The Letters of Vincent van Gogh to his Brother*, Vol. I, xi-lxiv.
Van Gogh derived from town of Gogh on German frontier. Van Gogh coat of arms: a bar with three roses.

XVIth century

Jacob van Gogh of Utrecht.
Jan van Gogh of Utrecht, wine merchant and bookseller; captain of the guard.

XVIIth century

Johannes van Gogh of Zutphen, magistrate and High Treasurer of the Union, 1628.
Michel van Gogh, first consul general in Brazil, afterwards treasurer of Zeeland.
Cornelius van Gogh of Boskoop, clergyman.
Matthias van Gogh, physician at Gouda, clergyman at Moordrecht.



Chronology

1853 March 30th, Vincent Willem van Gogh, born at the vicarage of Groot-Zundert in Brabant, near the Belgian border, son of a clergyman, Theodorus van Gogh of Breda and Anna Cornelia Carbentus of The Hague (cf. genealogy).

1857 May 1st, his brother, Theodorus van Gogh, born.

1865 Vincent sent to boarding school at Zevenbergen.

1869 Enters employ of Goupil and Co., The Hague, art dealers, under the protection of his uncle Vincent.

1873 Transferred in June to London branch of Goupil with highest recommendations. In same year Theo enters the Goupil branch in Brussels.

1874 Transferred in October to Paris branch following despondency after the refusal of his offer of marriage to daughter of landlady. Returns to London in December.

1875 May, sent again to Paris branch; becomes a religious fanatic.

1876 April, dismissed. Returns to England as schoolmaster, first at Ramsgate near London, then at Isleworth, where he serves as a kind of curate. Profound religious fervor deepens. Tries to find position as social worker or lay preacher. goes home for Christmas and remains in Holland.

1877 Takes position as bookseller at Dordrecht, but in May starts to study for University entrance examinations at Amsterdam in order to prepare for Theological Seminary. Lives with his uncle, Jan van Gogh, commandant of the Navy Yard.

1878 July, gives up studies at Amsterdam to enter school of Evangelization at Brussels but fails to qualify after three months' course. Volunteers for service in the Borinage at his own expense.

1879 January. Temporary appointment as evangelist among coal miners at Wasmes, in the Borinage, southern Belgium. Dismissed in July for unconventional zeal. Works on at own expense at nearby Cuesmes.

1880 After months of despair begins in August to draw seriously, using miners as models (Nos. 69, 70) and copying Millet, whose art remains the chief influence upon the work of his Dutch period. Moves to Brussels. Takes lessons in anatomy and perspective. Theo begins to send him money from Paris.

1881 Summer with parents at Etten. Terrible disappointment when his cousin, "K", a young widow, refuses him. December, settles at The Hague.

1882-1883 The Hague. Studies painting with his cousin, Anton Mauve. Drawings from models (Nos. 80, 90, 91). Lives in extreme poverty. Takes in Christine, a miserable, pregnant prostitute whom he tries to reform. Sells a score of town view drawings (cf. Nos. 77 and 79) for a total of less than $25. Theo increases monthly allowance from 100 to 150 francs. September, trip to Drenthe, northeast Holland. Bad health.

1884 Lives with parents at Nuenen. Paintings of peasants and weavers (No. 2). The *Potato Diggers* (No. 4).

1885 Nuenen. The *Potato Eaters* (No. 10), still life, landscapes, all in dark "green soap" palette. November to Antwerp. Studies in Academy. Starves to buy paints; near collapse.

1886 Paris in February. Lives with Theo. Influenced by Impressionists and Japanese prints (No. 21). Uses impressionist and neo-impressionist ("dot") technique. *Self Portrait* (No. 20), *Restaurant* (No. 19). Flower paintings, still life. Paints portrait for 20 francs. Exhibits at Tanguy's. Through Theo meets Pissarro, Degas, Seurat, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, Bernard. Summer at Asnières with Bernard. Paris climate and excitement affects his health.

1888 Arles in February. Intoxicated by Provençal color and sunlight. *Sunflowers* (No. 30), *Cafés* (Nos. 34, 35), *House* (No. 33), *Bedroom* (No. 36), *Self Portrait* (No. 38) and portraits of his friends *Roulin* (No. 28), *Mme. Roulin* (No. 40), *Mme. Ginoux* (No. 39), Landscapes (Nos. 23, 27). Passionate desire to organize communal artists' colony. Gauguin arrives mid-October at Theo's expense. First mental stroke December 24; cuts off his own ear; taken to Arles hospital. Gauguin goes back to Paris.

1889 After persecution in Arles goes (May 8) to the asylum at nearby St. Rémy. Landscapes, often in a more sober palette, (Nos. 52, 55). *Cypresses* (Nos. 49, 59). Copies after Millet (No. 57), Delacroix (No. 54), Daumier (No. 56). Mental crises recur between long periods of sanity.

1890 January, first laudatory article, by Aurier, *Mercure de France*. February, landscape sold in Brussels, 400 francs. St. Rémy becomes too depressing. May 17th, leaves St. Rémy for Auvers near Paris where Dr. Gachet (No. 127) cares for him. Portraits (Nos. 62, 63). Landscapes (Nos. 64, 66). Despondent, feeling himself a burden and fearing recurrence of attacks, he shoots himself, July 27th, and dies, July 29th. Buried at Auvers.

1891 January. Theo dies of worry, exhaustion and sorrow. Buried beside Vincent at Auvers.

Books van Gogh read as cited in his letters

". . . what we have read has come in the end to very near being part of us."
(Letter to Theo, No. 520)

London, June 1873-May 1875

Jan van Beers (poem)
C. P. Burger, *Museums of Holland*
Johannes van Vloten (on art)
Jules Michelet, *L'Amour; Jeanne d'Arc*
Alphonse Karr, *A Tour round My Garden*
Heine (work not specified)
Ernest Renan, *Jésus*
Victor Hugo (works not specified; probably *Notre Dame and Les Misérables*)
Edmond Roche, *Poems*
Lamartine, *Cromwell*

Paris, May 1875-March 1876

Jules Breton, *La Falaise; Les Champs et la Mer*
Saint-Beuve (work not specified)
Alfred de Musset (work not specified)
Ivet Rüchert, *At Midnight*
George Eliot, *Adam Bede; Felix Holt, the Radical; Scenes from Clerical Life*
Erckmann-Chatrian, *The Conscript; Waterloo; Friend Fritz; Madame Thérèse*
Longfellow, *Poems*
Hans Christian Anderson, *Fairy Tales*
Ludwig Uhland, *Poems*
Keats, *Hyperion* (?)
Bulwer-Lytton, *Kenelm Chillingly*

England, April-December 1876

Susan Warner, *The Wide Wide World*
Bossuet, *Funeral Orations*
F. P. G. Guizot, *L'Amour dans le Mariage*
Dinah Maria Craik, *John Halifax, Gentleman; A Life for a Life*
Christina Rossetti, *Poems* (?)
Hendrik Conscience (Flemish author) (work not specified)
P. A. de Genestet (Dutch poet), *Poems*
Dickens (works not specified)
Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*

Dordrecht, January-April 1877

Félix Bungener, *Christmas at the Pole*
Taine (work not specified)
Collin de Plancy, *Légendes des Artistes*

Amsterdam, May 1877-July 1878

Charles Blanc, *Les Artistes de Mon Temps*
Lamartine, *Cromwell* (re-read)
Théophile Gautier (work not specified)
H. F. R. de Lamennais (work not specified)
Alexandre Bida, *The Evangels*
Fénelon, *Les Aventures de Télémaque, fils d'Ulysse*
Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Jesus Christ*
Emile Souvestre, *An Attic Philosopher in Paris*
Homer, *The Odyssey* (actually read?)
Alphonse Esquiros (work not specified)
Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities; Child's History of England*
Carlyle, *French Revolution* (mentions wishing to read it)
Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution Française*
Gruson, *Histoire des Croisades*
Claudius, *Works*
George Eliot, *Silas Marner; Romola*

Etten, Borinage, Brussels,
July 1878 - April 1881

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
Ernest Legouvé, *Les Pères et les Enfants au XIXe Siècle*
Aeschylus (works not specified)
Dickens, *Hard Times* (and other works)
Victor Hugo, *Last Day of a Condemned Man*
Shakespeare (re-read; "read long ago")
J. C. Lavater and F. J. Gall, *Physiognomy and Phrenology*

Etten, April - December 1881

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre; Shirley*
Balzac, *Illusions Perdues; Le Père Goriot*
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Our Neighbors*
Michelet, *La Femme; Du Prêtre, de la Femme, de la Famille; My Wife and I*

The Hague,
December 1881 - September 1883

Thomas Hood, *Poems*
Dickens, *Edwin Drood*
Zola, *Nana; Une Page d'Amour; Le Ventre de Paris; La Curée; La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret; Son Excellence Eugène Rougon; Pot-Bouille; Au Bonheur des Dames; L'Assommoir; Mes Haines*
Gerard Bilders (Dutch painter), *Letters and Diary*
Erckmann-Chatrian, *Les Deux Frères*
Daudet, *Les Rois en Exil; Le Nabab*
John Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*
Victor Hugo, *History of a Crime; Ninety-Three; Notre Dame* (re-read after ten years); *Les Misérables* (re-read)
Henri Murger, *Les Buveurs d'Eau*
Thomas Moore, *Poems*
Fritz Reuter, *From My Prison; Dried Herbs* (re-read)
Michelet, *Le Peuple*
Balzac, *Petites Misères de la Vie Conjugale*
George Eliot, *Middlemarch*
Camille Lemonnier, *Un Mâle*
Jules Verne (when read?)
Taine (essay on Dickens)
Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Germinie Lacerteux; Soeur Philomène; Gavarni, l'Homme et l'Oeuvre*
Edgar Allen Poe (stories; when read?)
August Hoffmann von Fallersleben (stories; when read?)

Drenthe, September - November 1883

Pierre Joseph Proudhon (work not specified)
Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History; Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches: with elucidations*

Nuenen,
December 1883 - November 1885

François Coppée, *Poems*
Fromentin, *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois*
Daudet, *Sapho; L'Evangéliste; Histoire de Mon Livre*
Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (read earlier)
Jean François Gigoux, *Causeries sur les Artistes de Mon Temps*
Alfred Sensier (on Millet, Rousseau, Georges Michel)
Balzac, *La Comédie Humaine* (probably read earlier)
Paul Mantz (articles on art)
Zola, *Germinal*
E. and J. de Goncourt, *Chérie; L'Art du Dix-huitième Siècle* (2 vols.)
Israël Silvestre (on Delacroix)

Antwerp,
November 1885-February 1886

Zola, *L'Oeuvre*
A biography of Turgenev
Daudet (article on Turgenev)
Turgenev (ever actually read?)
Dumas, *Camille*

Paris, March 1886-February 1888

de Maupassant, *Bel-Ami*
Voltaire, *Candide* (read earlier)

NOTE: As there are only five letters from this period, there is practically no record of what van Gogh was reading at the time.

Arles, February 1888-May 1889

de Maupassant, *Des Vers; Pierre et Jean; Monsieur Parent*
Daudet, *Tartarin sur les Alpes; L'Immortel*
Zola, *Au Bonheur des Dames* (re-read)
Pierre Loti, *Madame Chrysanthème*
Victor Hugo, *L'Année Terrible*
Victor Henri de Rochefort-Lucay, *La Lanterne*
Paul Aléxis, *La Fin de Lucie Pellegrin*
Balzac, *César Birotteau; Eugénie Grandet; Le Médicin de Campagne*
Flaubert, *Bouvard et Pécuchet; Salammbô* (read earlier?)
E. and J. de Goncourt, *Les Frères Zemganno*
Jean Richepin, *Césarine; La Glue*
Frédéric Mistral, *Mireille*
Article on Tolstoi in *Revue des Deux Mondes*
Camille Lemonnier, *Ceux de la Glèbe*
Dickens, *Christmas Books*
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (re-read)
Renan, *L'Antéchrist*

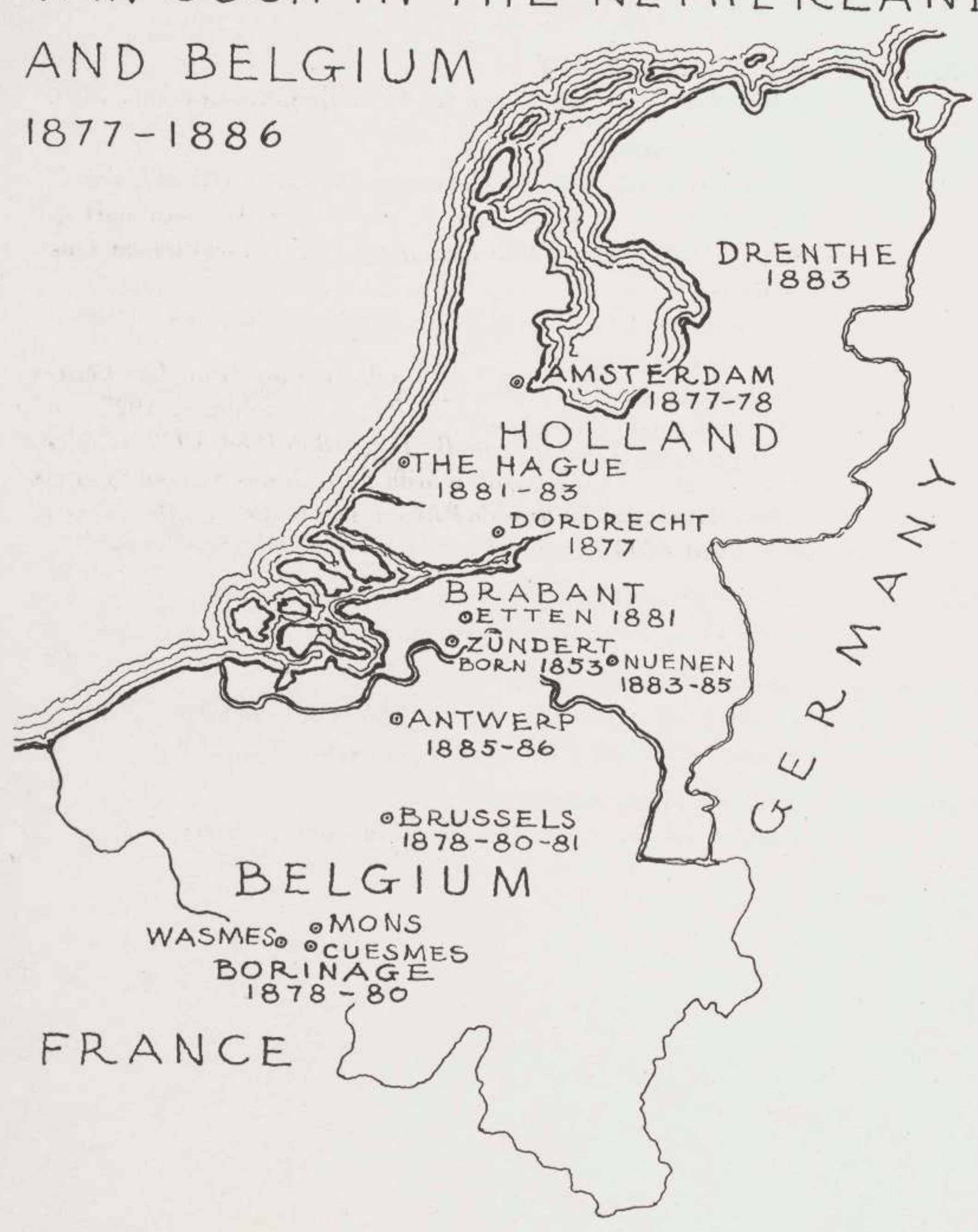
Saint-Rémy, May 1889-May 1890

Zola, *Le Rêve*
de Maupassant, *Fort comme la Mort*
Voltaire, *Zadig ou la Destinée* (re-read)
Edouard Rod, *Le Sens de la Vie*
Renan, *L'Abbesse de Jouarre*
Shakespeare, *Richard II; Henry IV; Henry V; Henry VII; Measure for Measure*
Homer ("hope to read at last")
Heine, *Reisebilder* (read earlier?)

NOTE: Besides the books listed above, van Gogh had read the *Bible* and probably Goethe's *Faust*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and possibly works by Diderot and Boccaccio.

Oil paintings by van Gogh in American museums

Buffalo	**Albright Art Gallery** *Landscape near Saint-Rémy* (de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 726)
Chicago	**The Art Institute** *Montmartre* (de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 272) (Birch-Bartlett Collection) *Sunny Midi* (de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 468) (Coburn Collection) *Bedroom at Arles* (de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 484) (Birch-Bartlett Collection) *Woman Rocking a Cradle* (de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 506) (Birch-Bartlett Collection) *Still Life* (Birch-Bartlett Collection)
Detroit	**The Detroit Institute of Arts** *Self Portrait in Straw Hat* (de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 526)
Kansas City	**The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art** *Olive Trees* (de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 715)
Toledo	**Toledo Museum of Art** *Wheat Fields near Arles* (de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 559) *Houses at Auvers* (de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 759)
Washington	**Phillips Memorial Gallery** *Gardens at Arles* (de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 566)


VAN GOGH IN THE NETHERLANDS
AND BELGIUM
1877-1886
DRENTHE
1883
AMSTERDAM
1877-78
HOLLAND
THE HAGUE
1881-83
DORDRECHT
1877
BRABANT
ETTEN 1881
ZŪNDERT
BORN 1853
NUENEN
1883-85
ANTWERP
1885-86
BRUSSELS
1878-80-81
GERMANY
BELGIUM
MONS
WASMES
CUESMES
BORINAGE
1878-80
FRANCE

Catalog

The catalog is divided into two parts: Oil paintings
Drawings, watercolors and prints

The order is approximately chronological, following for the most part the *Catalogue Raisonné* of J. B. de la Faille. Illustrations of the works by van Gogh not reproduced may be found in the de la Faille *Catalogue.*

The notes on the paintings unless otherwise indicated are from *The Letters of Vincent van Gogh to his Brother, 1872-1886,* two volumes, 1927, and *Further Letters of Vincent van Gogh to his Brother, 1886-1889,* 1929, London, Constable & Co. Ltd. and Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co. Notes marked "Letters to Bernard" are translated from *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard,* Paris, Ambroise Vollard, 1911.

Oil Paintings

Dutch Period

1. Scheveningen Fisherwoman

Oil on canvas, 20¾ x 13½ inches
Painted at The Hague, August, 1882
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 6 (*Femme de pêcheur sur la plage*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

. . . I have painted a few studies of the figure . . . I send you two sketches.

The painting of the figure appeals to me very much, but it must ripen—I must learn to know the technique better—that which is sometimes called "la cuisine de l'art". In the beginning I shall have to do much scraping, and often to begin anew, but I feel that I learned from it and that gives me a new fresh view on the things. (*Letter* 226)



Dutch Period

2. Weaver

Oil on canvas, 24⅜ x 36⅝ inches
Painted at Nuenen, July, 1884
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 37 (*Intérieur avec tisserand*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

Written from The Hague, September 10, 1882, about two years before this painting:

I have asked her (his sister Wilhelmina) for some particulars about the weavers, who interest me very much. I saw them at the time when I was in the Pas de Calais — it was indescribably beautiful. However, I need not paint weavers as yet, though I certainly hope to do so sooner or later. (*Letter* 229)

Written from The Hague, 1883:

Do you know what I long for sometimes? To make a trip to Brabant. I should love to draw the old churchyard at Nuenen, and the weavers.

To make, for instance, during a month, studies of Brabant, and to come back with a lot of them, for a large drawing of a peasant funeral for instance. (*Letter* 295)

Written from Nuenen, January, 1884:

I am busy *painting* every day studies of the weavers here, which I think are technically better than the painted studies from Drenthe, which I sent you. (*Letter* 355)

Those looms will cost me still a lot of hard work, but they are in reality such splendid things, all that old oakwood against a greyish wall, that I certainly believe it is a good thing to have them painted. But we must try to get them so that they will harmonize in colour and tone with other Dutch pictures. Soon I hope to start another two of weavers, where the figure comes in quite differently, that is to say, the weaver does not sit behind it, but is arranging the threads of the cloth. I have seen them weaving in the evening by lamplight, which gives very Rembrandtesque effects.

Nowadays, they use a kind of suspension lamp, but I got from a weaver a little lamp, as, for instance, the one in "La Veillée" by Millet. They used to work by them formerly.

The other day, I also saw coloured pieces of cloth, woven by evening. . . . When I saw it, they were also just arranging the threads, so dark, bent figures against the light, standing out against the colour of the cloth, cast big shadows of the laths and beams of the loom on the white walls. (*Letter* 367)



3. Ox Cart

Oil on canvas, 23¼ x 31 inches
Painted at Nuenen, July, 1884
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 39 (*Charrette de boeuf*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

The last things I made are two rather large studies of ox-wagons, a black ox and a red one. (*Letter* 373)

4. Potato Diggers

Oil on canvas, 26 x 58⅝ inches
Painted at Nuenen, August, 1884
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 41 (*Plantage des pommes de terre*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated on following page

The Hague, January, 1882:

I have about twelve figures of diggers and men who are working in a potato field, and I wonder if I could not make something of it, you have still a few, for instance, a man who fills a bag with potatoes. Well, I do not know for sure, but sooner or later I shall accomplish that, for I looked at it so attentively this summer, and here in the dunes I could make a good study of the earth and the sky, and then boldly put in the figures. (*Letter* 169)

The Hague, Summer, 1883:

Just while making these studies, the plan for a still larger drawing begins to take root, namely, that of digging potatoes, and I have it so in my mind that I think you will find something in it, perhaps.

I should want the landscape to be a level ground with a little row of dunes. The figures about a foot high, the composition in the breadth 1 by 2.

Right in front, in a corner, as a set-off, kneeling figures of women who gather the potatoes.

On the second plane, a row of diggers, men and women.

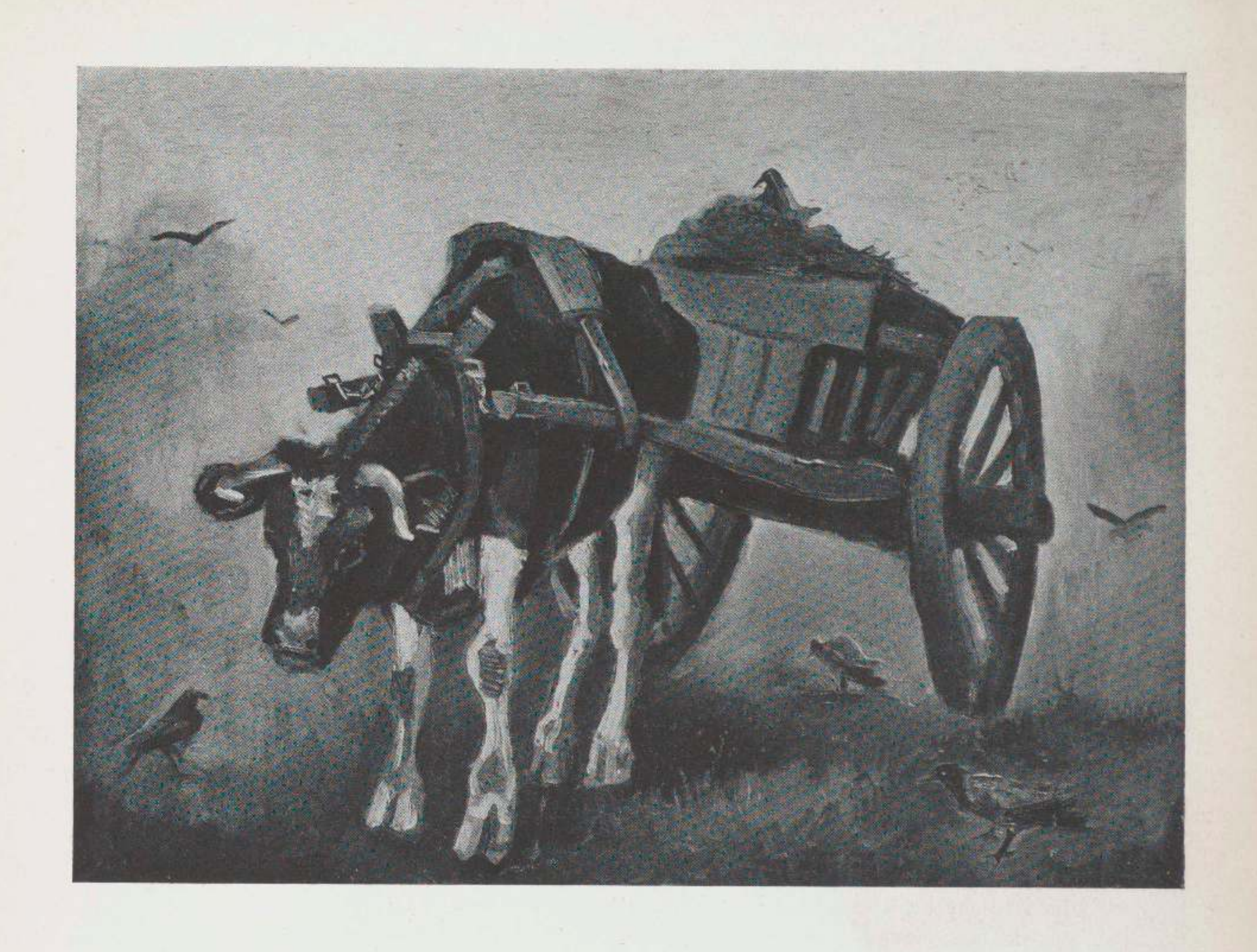
Well, except the kneeling women figures, I could show you all the other figures already in large studies.

Yes, I should like to start that drawing one of these days. I have the grounds pretty well in my mind and will choose at my ease a fine potato field and make studies of it for the lines of the landscape.

Toward the autumn, when they dig the potatoes, the drawing ought to be finished, at least an elaborate sketch of it, and I should only have to put in the finishing touches.

Last year I saw it here, the year before last I saw it in Brabant, where it was splendid, and

(*Continued on following page*)



the year before that in the Borinage, where it was done by miners. So I have it full right in my mind.

The figures ought to be so that it would be true everywhere, rather than a study of costume.

I hope I shall succeed in having the skeleton of the potato-drawing ready, about the time of your coming. (*Letter* 293)

The Hague, Summer, 1883:

As to the painting of those potato diggers . . . I can well imagine beforehand what will be the difficulties to overcome for the final picture.

If I can just in the least afford it I will make a few studies for it in the dunes before you come, viz. I will go with my model to those fields behind Loosduinen early in the morning, or in the evening twilight. I think I can make something of it.

The composition of the drawing might be a little altered . . . I think the figures must stand out strongly, and all the rest in a violetish haze.

In the drawing I find the division of dark and lighted planes not simple enough, the figures being partly light and partly dark, and the ground likewise. Either the ground and the figures must be brought more in harmony and form a dark silhouette against a light sky,—or sky and ground must form together a grey vapourous whole, against which the tony planes of the figures stand out. (*Letter* 308)

Nuenen, August, 1884:

Last week, I was every day in the fields during the harvest, of which I made a composition.

I made this for somebody in Eindhoven who wants to decorate a dining room. He intended to do this with compositions of diverse *saints*. I begged him to consider whether the appetite of the worthy people who would have to sit down at that table would not be more stimulated by six illustrations from peasant life of the Meierij—at the same time symbolizing the four seasons, than by the mystical personages above mentioned. And after a visit to the studio, the man became quite enthusiastic about it. . . . I gave him preliminary sketches of a sower, plougher, shepherd, harvest, potato gathering, ox-wagon in the snow. . . . He is pleased with this first panel, as well as with my sketches for the other subjects. (*Letter* 374)

5. Water Mill

Oil on cardboard, 29½ x 39⅜ inches
Painted at Nuenen, November, 1884
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 47 (*Le moulin à eau*)
Collection Durand-Ruel, Inc., New York
Illustrated opposite

Though it has been freezing pretty hard here for the last few days, I am still at work out-of-doors, on a rather large study (more than one metre) of an old water-mill at Gennep, on the other side of Eindhoven.

(*Continued on following page*)



I want to finish it quite out-of-doors, but it will certainly be the last I shall paint out-of-doors this year. (*Letter* 385)

Yesterday I just brought home that study of the water-mill at Gennep, which I painted with pleasure, and which has procured me a new friend in Eindhoven, who wants to learn to paint by all means, and to whom I paid a visit, when we set to work at once. (*Letter* 386)

6. Still Life with Straw Hat

Oil on canvas, 14½ x 21 inches
Painted at Nuenen, November-December, 1884
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 62 (*Nature morte*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

Last week I painted still-life day after day, with the people who paint at Eindhoven. (*Letter* 387)

Speaking of my work, I had already written to you that I have been very busy painting still-life lately, and I like it immensely. I shall send you some.

I know, they are hard to sell, but it is deuced useful, and I shall continue to paint them this winter. (*Letter* 425)

The still-lifes which I am sending are studies for colour, I intend to make more of them; do not think this is useless. (*Letter* 426)



7. Peasant Woman with White Cap (Study for the *Potato Eaters)*

Oil on canvas, 17⅝ x 14 inches
Painted at Nuenen, 1884
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 85 (*La paysanne au bonnet blanc*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar

Illustrated opposite

8. Head of Peasant (Study for the *Potato Eaters*)

Oil on canvas, 16 x 13⅜ inches
Painted at Nuenen, 1884
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 86 (*Tête de paysanne*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

. . . for my study I must paint 50 heads, just because I have got the knack of them. As soon as possible and one after the other. (*Letter* 384)

. . . whether people approve or do not approve of what I do, and how I do it, I, for my part, know no other way than to wrestle so long with nature till she tells me her secret.

All the time I am working at various heads and hands. (*Letter* 393)

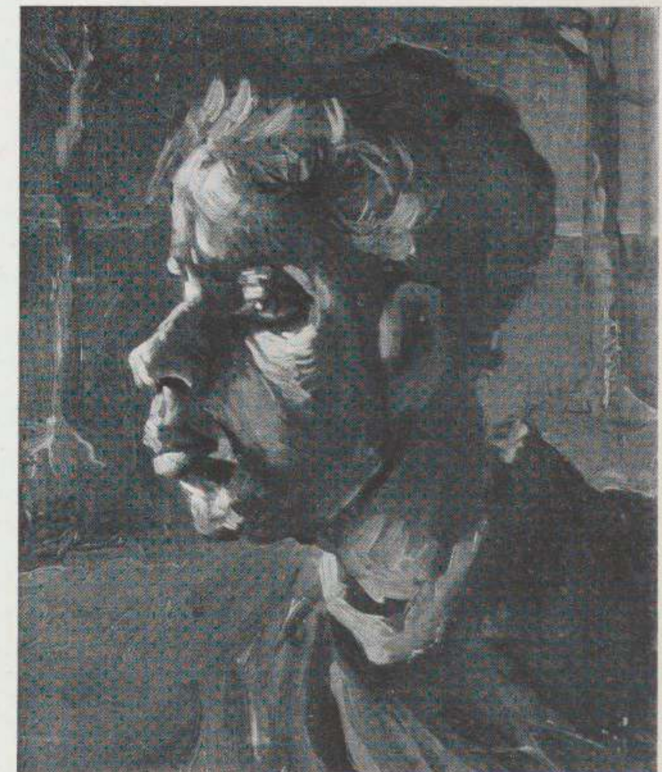
I am very busy painting those heads. I paint in the daytime and draw in the evening. In this way I have painted at least some thirty already and drawn as many.

With this result, that I see a chance of doing it better still ere long I hope. (*Letter* 394)

Some of the heads I promised you are finished, but they are not quite dry yet. As I wrote you already, they were painted in a dark cottage, and they are studies in the real sense of the word. . . .

I work hard, and suppose that only one of ten or twenty studies which I make, is worth seeing, those few, either more or less in number, though they may be of *no* value *now*, they may be so later on, perhaps. (*Letter* 396)





9. Potato Eaters

Oil on canvas, 32 x 44¾ inches. Painted at Nuenen, May, 1885
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 82 (*Les mangeurs de pommes de terre*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam. *Illustrated opposite*

This week I intend to start that composition of those peasants around a dish of potatoes in the evening . . . I am going to begin the studies for the different figures. (*Letter* 398)

I am working again at those peasants around the dish of potatoes. I just came home from this cottage and have been working at it by lamplight, though I began it by daylight this time. . . .

I painted it on a rather large canvas, and as the sketch is now, I think there is some life in it.

But yet I am sure C. M., for instance, would find fault with the drawing. . . . (*Letter* 399)

I want to tell you that I am working at the potato-eaters, and I have painted new studies of the heads, especially the hands are greatly altered.

What I try most is to bring *life* into it.

I will not send the potato-eaters unless *I know for sure* there is *something* in it.

But I am getting on with it, and I think there are quite other things in it than you ever can have seen in my work. At least so distinctly.

I mean especially the life. I paint this *from memory on the picture itself*. But you know yourself how many times I have painted the heads!

And then I run over every night to hit off some details on the spot.

But in the picture I give free scope to my own head in the sense of *thought* or imagination, which is not so much the case in *studies* where no creative process is allowed, but where one finds food for one's imagination in reality, in order to make it exact. . . .

But the most difficult things—the heads, the hands, and the ensemble—are finished. Perhaps you will now find in it what you wrote some time ago, that though it is personal, yet it will remind you of other painters—with a certain family likeness. (*Letter* 403)

. . . I should have liked to send you the picture of the potato-eaters on [your birthday], but though it is getting on well, it is not quite finished yet.

Though the final picture will have been painted in a relatively short time, and for the greater part from memory, yet it has taken a whole winter of painting study-heads and hands.

And as to those few days in which I have painted it now, it has been a regular battle, but one for which I feel great animation. Though every moment I was afraid I should never get out of it. But painting is also "agir-créer." . . .

I have tried to make it clear how those people, eating their potatoes under the lamplight, have dug the earth with those very hands they put in the dish, and so it speaks of *manual labour*, and how they have honestly earned their food.

(*Continued on following page*)



I have wanted to give the impression of quite a different way of living than that of us civilized people. Therefore I am not at all anxious for everyone to like it or to admire it at once.

In the same way it would be wrong, I think, to give a peasant picture a certain conventional smoothness. If a peasant picture smells of bacon, smoke, potato-steam, all right, that's not unhealthy, if a stable smells of dung, all right, that belongs to a stable; if the field has an odour of ripe corn or potatoes or of guano or manure, that's healthy, especially for people from the city.

Such pictures may *teach* them something. But to be perfumed is not what a peasant picture needs. . . .

To paint peasant-life is a serious thing, and I should reproach myself if I did not try to make pictures which raise serious thoughts in those who think seriously about art and about life. . . .

One must paint the peasants as being one of them, as feeling, thinking like they do. . . .

I think the potato-eaters will get finished after all; the last days are almost dangerous for a picture, as you know, because when it is not quite dry, one cannot work in it with a large brush without the great chance of spoiling it. And the alterations must be made quietly

(Continued on following page)

and calmly with a small brush. Therefore I have simply taken it to my friend and told him to take care that I should not spoil it in that way and that I should come to his house to give those finishing touches. You will see, it has originality. (*Letter* 404)

. . . it is very dark, and in the white, for instance, hardly any white has been used, but simply the neutral colour, which is made by mixing red, blue, yellow, for instance, vermilion, Paris blue and yellow of Naples.

That colour in itself is therefore a pretty dark grey, but in the picture it seems white.

I will tell you why I do so. Here the subject is a grey interior lit up by a little lamp.

The dirty linen table-cloth, the smoky wall, the dirty caps in which the women have worked in the field, all this *when seen through the eyelashes* in the light of the lamp, proves to be *very dark* grey, and the lamp, though a yellow reddish blaze, is lighter still — even much so, than the white in question.

As to the flesh-colours — I know quite well that considered superficially, viz. without thinking about it, they seem *what is called* flesh-colour.

But at first in the picture I have tried to paint them so, with yellow ochre, red ochre and white, for instance.

But that was ever so much *too light* and was decidedly wrong.

What was to be done! All the heads were finished, and even finished with great care, but I repainted them straightway, unmercifully, and the colour in which they are painted now is like *the colour of a good dusty potato unpeeled, of course.*

While doing so, I thought how perfectly exact is that saying about the peasants of Millet: "Ses paysans semblent peints avec la terre qu'ils ensemencent." (*Letter* 405)

. . . it will perhaps disappoint you.

If this might be the case, take your time to look at it. . . .

In the way of criticism I myself could point out things which probably will escape most of the critics.

But the reason why I send it with a certain confidence is that, in contrast to many other pictures, there is rusticity, and a certain animation in it. And so, though painted in a different style, in another century than the old Dutch masters, Ostade, for instance, yet it comes also from the heart of the peasant's life, and is original. . . .

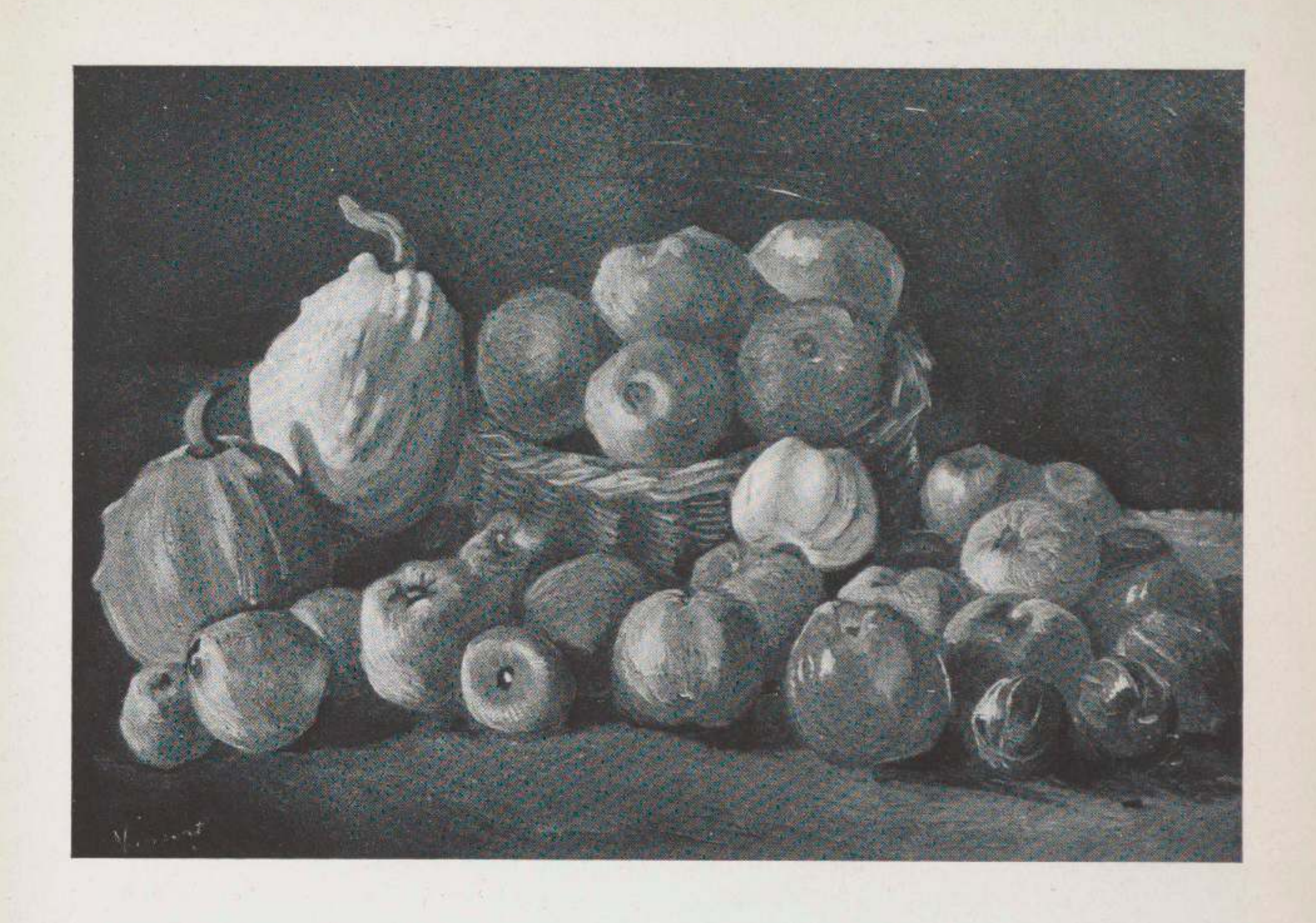
In the Salon so many pictures . . . bore me terribly, because they give me neither food for the heart nor the mind, because they are apparently made without a certain passion. And there is some passion in what I send you.

I have loved to make it, and I have worked at it with a certain animation.

It has not bored me, perhaps for that reason it will not bore others. Because I believe this, I send it you. (*Letter* 406)

10. Still Life with Apples and Pumpkins

Oil on canvas, 23½ x 33½ inches. Painted at Nuenen, September, 1885
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 106 (*Nature morte de fruits*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Illustrated opposite*



11. Bird Nests

Oil on canvas, 13 x 17 inches
Painted at Nuenen, October, 1885
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 112 (*Nids d'oiseaux*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

[I made] a long expedition in company of a peasant boy, in order to find a wren's nest. We found six of them. . . . And they were all nests from which the young birds had flown out, so one could take them without too much scruple. (*Letter* 411)

I am now busy painting still-lifes of my birds' nests, four of which are finished; I think some people who are good observers of nature, might like them, because of the colours of the moss, the dry leaves and the grasses. (*Letter* 425)

The birds' nests have also been painted on purpose against a black background, because I openly want to express in these studies, that the objects do not appear in their natural surroundings, but against a conventional background. A *living* nest in nature is quite different, one hardly sees the nest itself, one sees the birds.

But when one wants to paint nests from one's *collection of nests*, one cannot express strongly enough the fact that the background and the surroundings in nature are quite different, I straightway painted the background black. But it is a fact that in a still-life a coloured background can be beautiful. (*Letter* 428)



12. Montmartre

Oil on canvas, 15 x 24⅜ inches
Painted 1886-1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 266 (*La butte Montmartre*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar

Illustrated opposite

13. Reclining Nude

Oil on canvas, 9½ x 16⅛ inches
Painted 1886-1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 329 (*Femme nue couchée*)
Collection S. van Deventer, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

14. Bouquet of Flowers

Oil on canvas, 21⅝ x 16¾ inches
Painted 1886-1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 236 (*Bouquet de fleurs*)
Collection James W. Barney, New York

Not illustrated
Reproduced in the catalog: *Museum of Modern Art, First Loan Exhibition*, plate 93

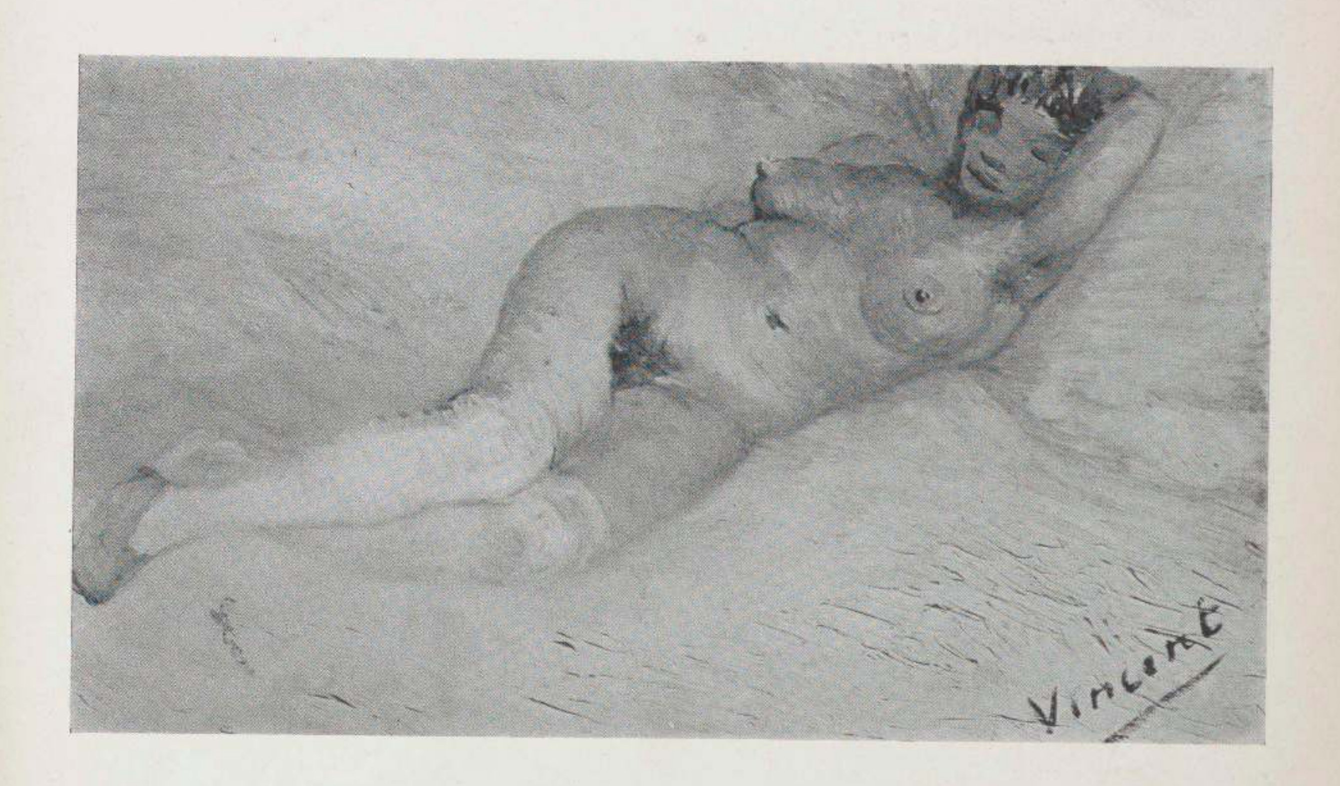
15. Poppies

Oil on canvas, 25⅝ x 19¾ inches
Painted 1886-1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 280 (*Fleurs des champs*)
Private Collection, New York

Not illustrated
Reproduced in the catalog: *Museum of Modern Art, First Loan Exhibition*, plate 92

From a letter from Theo to his mother, Paris, Summer, 1886:

. . . he has friends who send him every week a lot of beautiful flowers which he uses for still-life, he paints chiefly flowers, especially to make the colours of his next pictures brighter and clearer. (*Vol. I, p. xlvii*)


Vincent

16. Self Portrait

Oil on cardboard, 7½ x 5½ inches
Painted 1886-1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 296 (*Portrait de lui-même*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Not illustrated

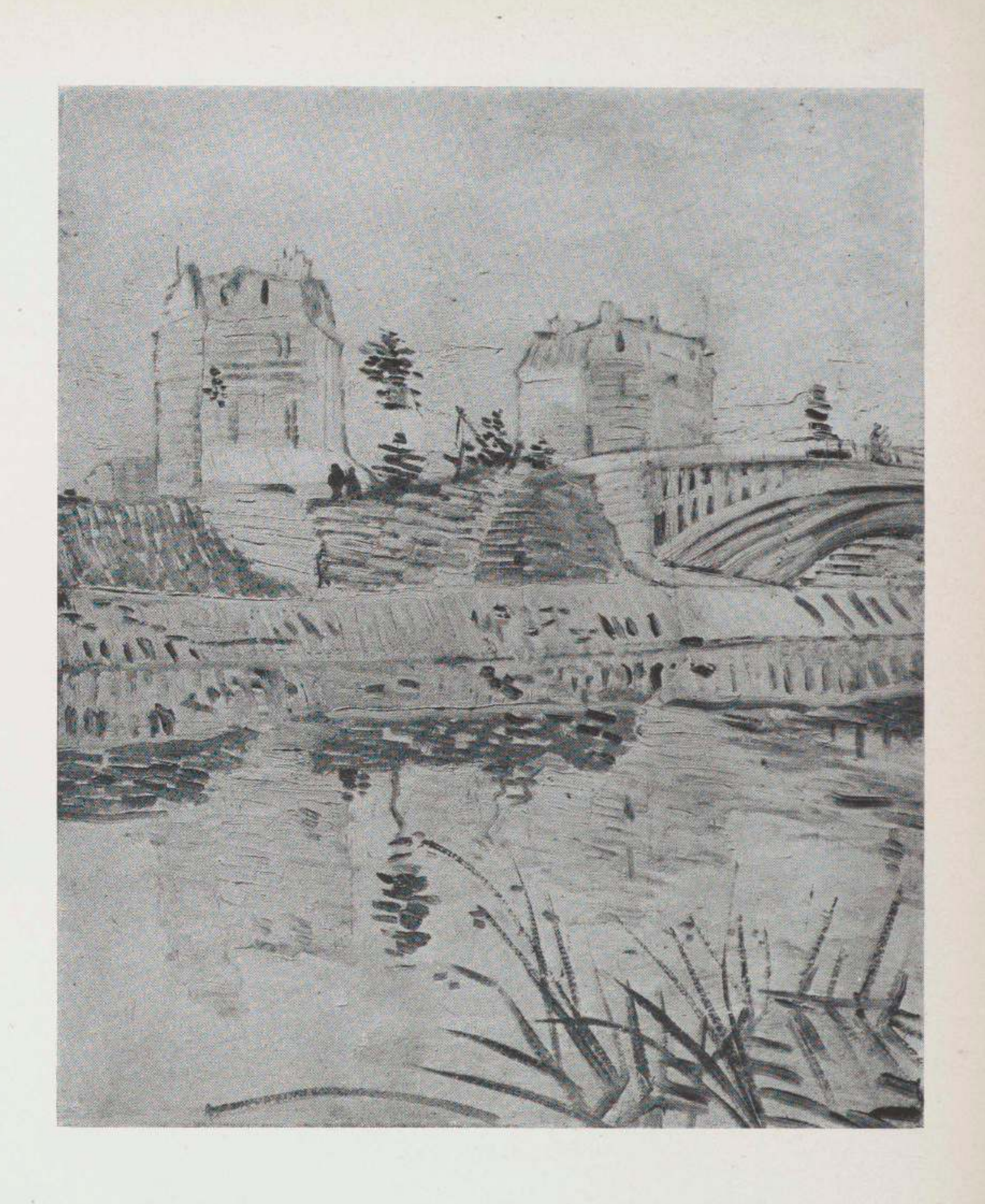
17. Bridge of Asnières

Oil on canvas, 21⅝ x 18⅛ inches
Painted 1886-1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 303 (*Pont d'Asnières*)
Collection Dr. F. H. Hirschland, New York
Illustrated opposite

I've been worried by the sunset with figures and a bridge that I spoke of to Bernard. The bad weather prevented me working on the spot and I've completely ruined it trying to finish it at home. However I began again at once, the same subject on another canvas, but as the weather was quite different, in grey tones and without figures. (*Letter* 471)

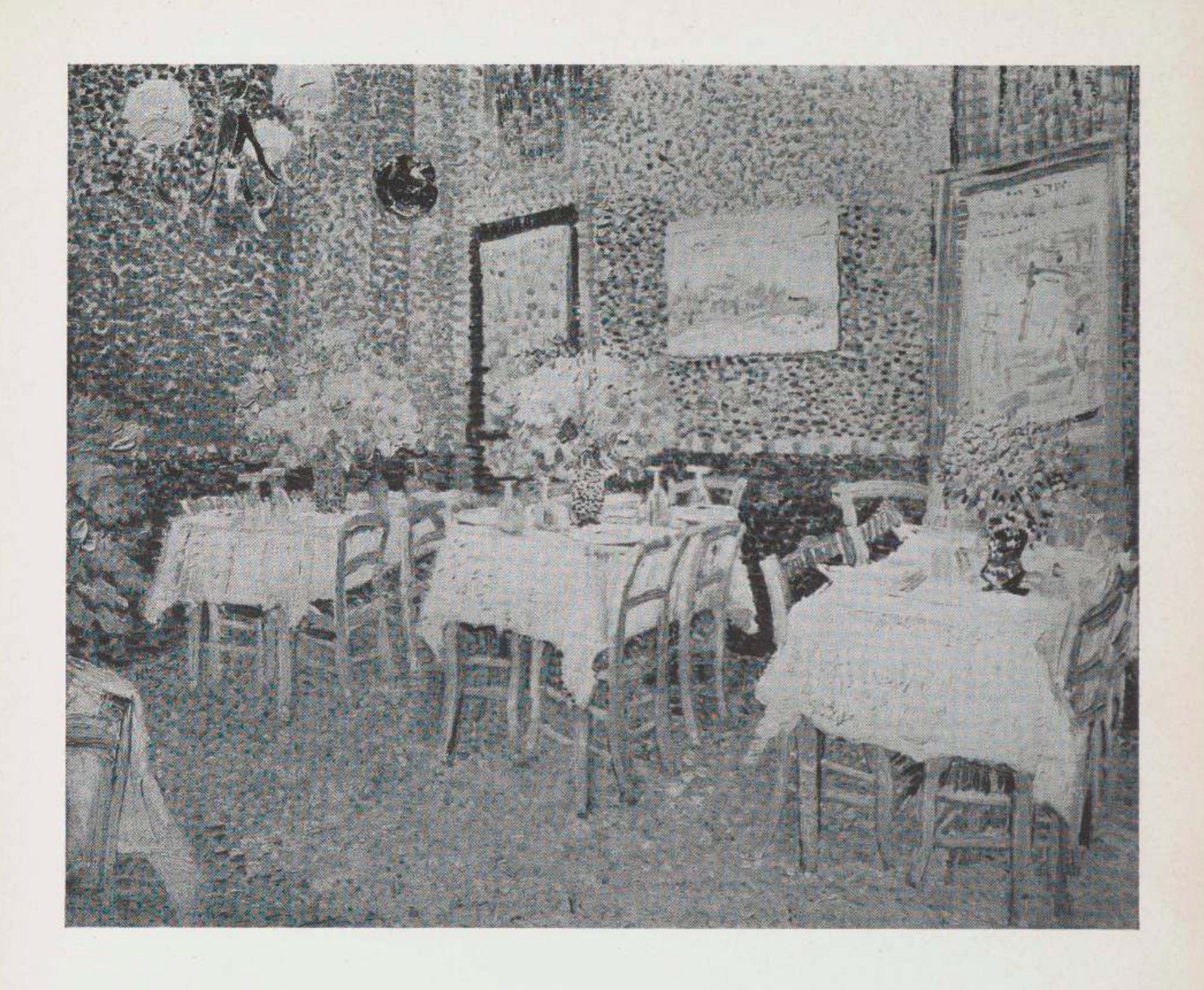
18. Cornfield

Oil on canvas, 21¼ x 25⅜ inches
Painted 1886-1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 310 (*Champs de blé*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Not illustrated



19. Restaurant Interior

Oil on canvas, 18 x 22¼ inches
Painted 1886-1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 342 (*Intérieur de restaurant*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite



Paris Period

20. Self Portrait

Oil on cardboard, 16 x 12¾ inches
Painted 1886-1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 345 (*Portrait de l'artiste*)
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Winterbotham, Burlington, Vermont
Illustrated opposite

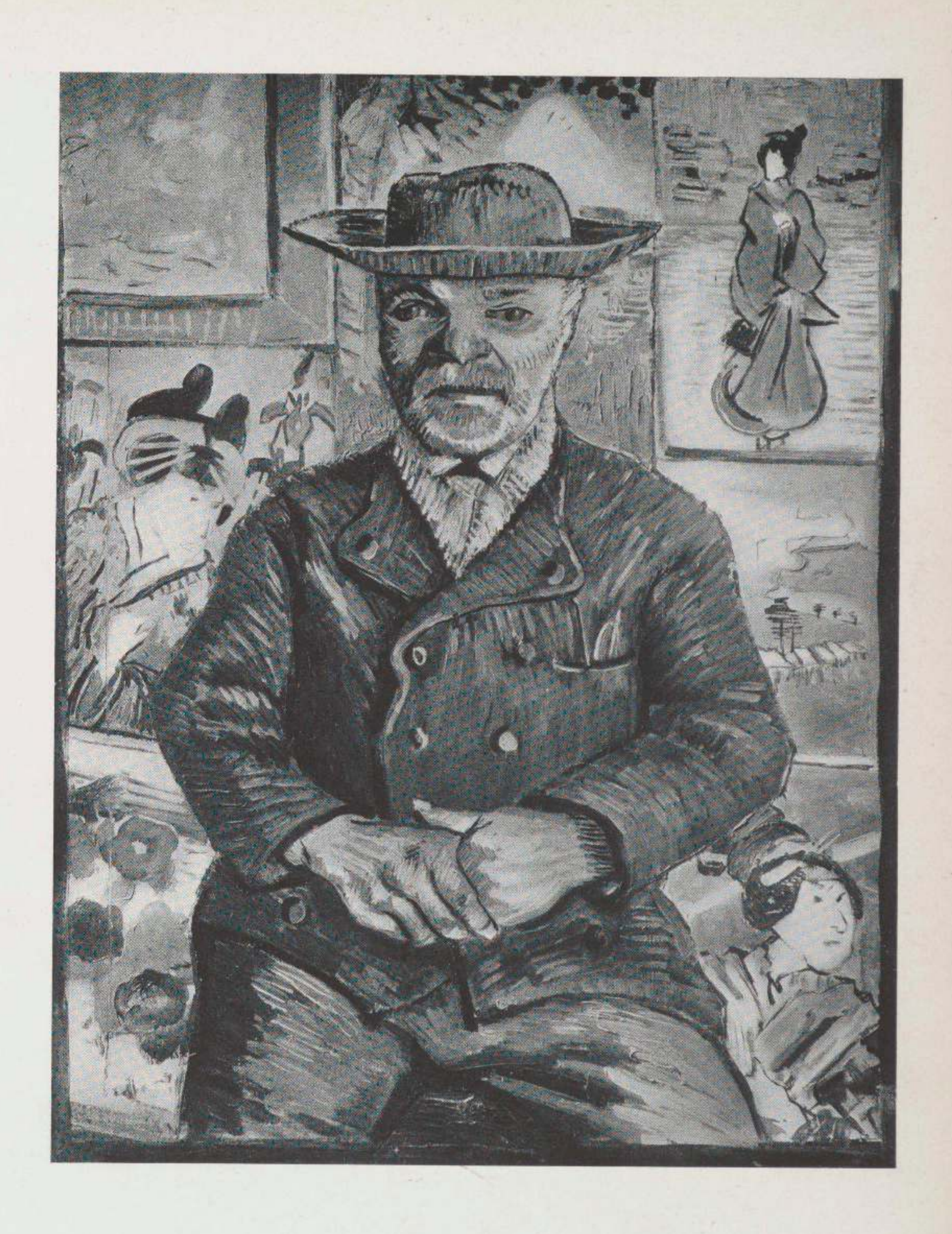


21. Père Tanguy

Oil on canvas, 25 x 20⅛ inches
Painted 1886-1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 364 (*Le père Tanguy*)
Collection Wildenstein and Company, New York and Paris
Illustrated opposite

Xantippe, Mother Tanguy, and some other good ladies, have by some queer freak of Nature heads of silex or flint. Certainly these ladies are a good deal more dangerous in the civilized world they go about in than the poor souls bitten by mad dogs who live in the Pasteur Institute. And old Tanguy would be right a hundred times over to kill his lady—but he won't do it, any more than Socrates.

And for this reason. Old Tanguy has more in common—in resignation and long suffering anyhow—with the ancient Christians, martyrs and slaves, than with the present day rotters of Paris. (*Letter* 506)



22. Still Life with Lemons and Wine Bottle

Oil on canvas, 20⅞ x 25¼ inches
Painted 1886-1888
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 384 (*Nature morte, citrons*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite



23. Bridge at Arles

Oil on canvas, 21½ x 25½ inches
Painted March-April, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 397 (*Le pont de l'Anglois*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

As for the work, I brought back a canvas of 15 today. It is a drawbridge with a little cart going over it, outlined against a blue sky—the river blue as well, the banks orange coloured with green grass and a group of washerwomen in smocks and many coloured caps.
(*Letter* 469)

[Tersteeg] shall have a picture of mine in his own collection. I have been turning it over these days and I have thought of an odd odd thing, not like what I generally do. It is the drawbridge with the little yellow cart and the group of women washing, a study in which the ground is bright orange, the grass bright green and the sky and water blue.

It only needs a frame specially designed for it in royal blue and gold, the mount blue, the outside moulding gold, if necessary the frame could be in blue plush, but it would be better painted. I think I can assure you that the work I'm doing here is better than in the Asnières country last spring. (*Letter* 473)

After dinner I set to work on the same picture that Tersteeg is to have (the "Pont de l'Anglais") for you. (*Letter* 476)

The Pont de l'Anglais is getting on well for you and will be better than the study, I think. (*Letter* 477)

24. Still Life with Oranges

Oil on canvas, 17¾ x 21¼ inches
Painted March-April, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 395 (*Nature morte*)
Collection S. van Deventer, Wassenaar
Not illustrated

I have just finished a study like the one Lucien Pissarro has of mine, but this time it is oranges. (*Letter* 467)



25. Vegetable Gardens

Oil on canvas, 29 x 36¼ inches
Painted June, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 412 (*Jardins de maraîchers*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Illustrated opposite



26. Boats at Saintes-Maries

Oil on canvas, 26 x 32¼ inches
Painted at Saintes-Maries, June, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 413 (*Barques sur la plage*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Illustrated opposite

I am writing to you from Stes. Maries on the shore of the Mediterranean at last. The Mediterranean has the colours of mackerel, changeable I mean. You don't always know if it is green or violet, you can't even say it's blue, because the next moment the changing light has taken on a tinge of rose colour or grey. (*Letter* 499)

Just when I was going to start in the morning, very early, I made the drawing of the boats, and I have the picture from it in hand, a canvas of 30 with more sea and sky on the right.

It was before the boats cleared off, I had watched it all the other mornings, but as they leave very early I hadn't time to do it. (*Letter* 500)

At last I have seen the Mediterranean. . . . I passed a week at Saintes-Maries.

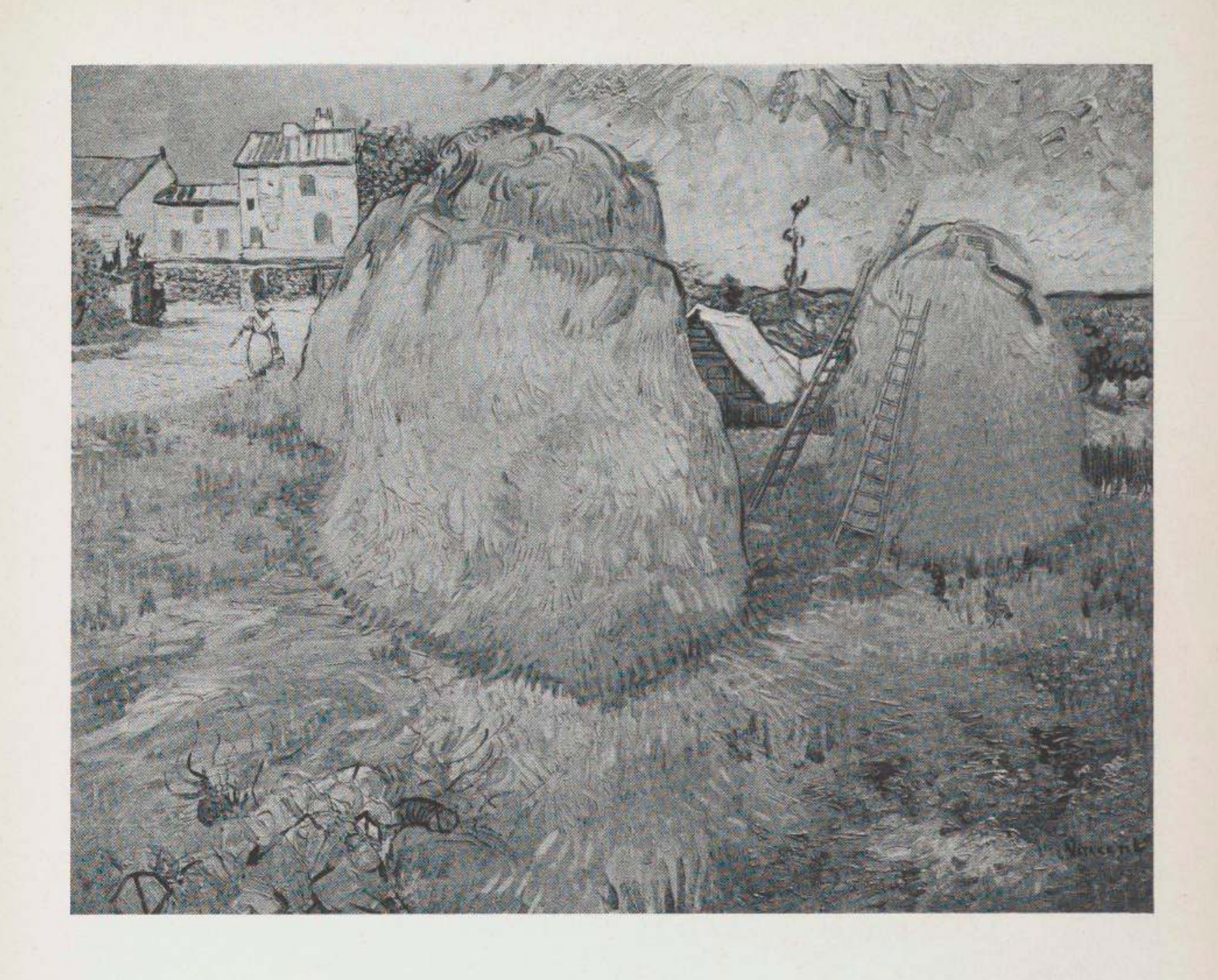
On the flat, sandy beach little green, red, blue boats, so beautiful in shape and colour that they made you think of flowers. (*To Bernard*, 1888. *Letter* 6)



27. Haystacks in Provence

Oil on canvas, 29 x 37 inches
Painted June, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 425 (*Les meules en Provence*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

I am working on a landscape with cornfields. . . . And I have another subject, a farm and some ricks, which will probably be a companion picture. (*Letter* 497)


Vincent

Arles Period

28. The Postman Roulin

Oil on canvas, 31½ x 25 inches
Painted August, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 432 (*Le facteur Roulin*)
Collection Robert Treat Paine, 2nd, Boston
Illustrated opposite

I am now at work with another model, a postman in a blue uniform, trimmed with gold, a big bearded face, very like Socrates. A violent Republican like Tanguy. A man more interesting than most. (*Letter* 516)

I could not pay my rent on the 1st, as I had had the model all week. I have two portraits of the same model in hand, which are more important to me than anything else. . . .

So I have now two figures in hand, one the head, and one a half-length with the hands, of an old postman in a dark blue uniform. He has a head like Socrates, interesting to paint.

There is no better or shorter way of improving your work than doing figures. And I always feel confident when I am doing portraits, knowing that that work has much more depth—it isn't the right word perhaps, but it is what lets me cultivate whatever is best and deepest in me. (*Letter* 517)

Last week I did not one only but two portraits of my postman, a half-length with the hands, and a head, life size. The good fellow, as he would not accept money, *cost more* eating and drinking with me, and I gave him besides the *Lantern* of Rochefort. But that is a trifling evil, considering that he posed very well, and that I expect to paint his baby very shortly, for his wife has just been brought to bed. (*Letter* 518)

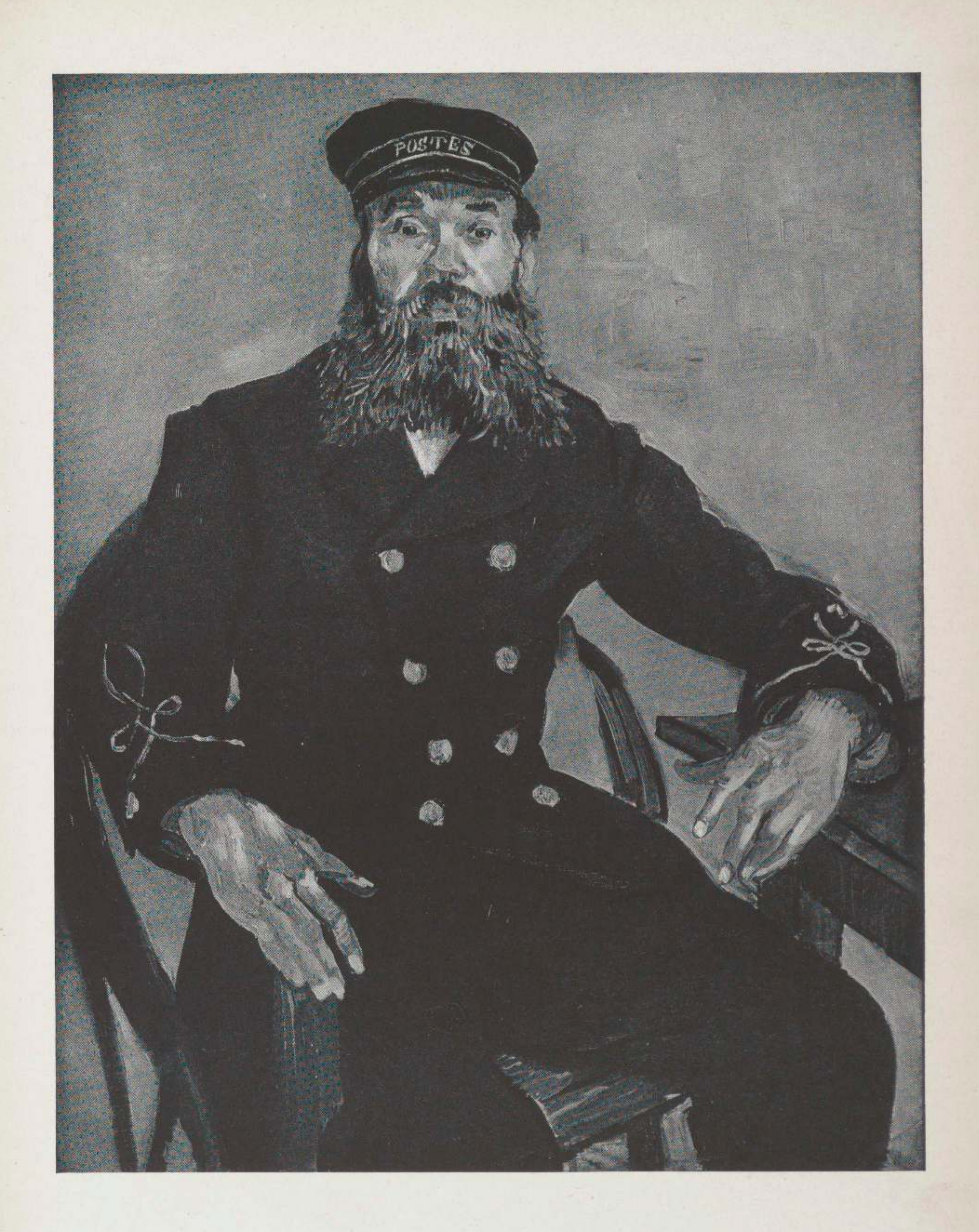
I do not know if I can paint the postman *as I feel him*, this man is like old Tanguy in so far as he is revolutionary, he is probably thought a good republican because he wholeheartedly detests the republic which we now enjoy, and because in the end he begins to doubt, to be a little disillusioned, as to the actual republican principle itself.

But I watched him sing the *Marseillaise*, and I thought I was watching '89, not next year, but that of 99 years ago. It was a Delacroix, a Daumier, straight from the old Dutch. (*Letter* 520)

My friend the postman, for instance, lives a great deal in cafés, and is certainly more or less of a drinker, and has been so all his life. But he is so much the reverse of a sot, he is so natural, so intelligent in excitement, and he argues with such sweep in the style of Garibaldi, that I gladly reduce the legend of Monticelli the drunkard on absinthe, to exactly the same proportions as my postman. (*Letter* 550)

What a Government—and what times we live in! As for me, I have rarely seen a man of Roulin's temper, there is something in him tremendously like Socrates, ugly as a satyr, as Michelet called him, "until on the last day a god appeared in him that illumined the Parthenon." (*Letter* 572)

(*Continued on following page*)


POSTES

Roulin left yesterday. . . . It was touching to see him with his children this last day, especially with the quite tiny one when he made her laugh and jump on his knee, and sang for her.

His voice has a strangely pure and touching quality in which there was for my ear at once a sweet and mournful cradle-song, and a kind of far away echo of the trumpet of revolutionary France. He was not sad however. On the contrary he had put on his brand new uniform which he had received that very day, and every one was making much of him.

(*Letter* 573)

I know already that several people here would ask me for portraits if they dared. Roulin, quite a poor fellow, and small employé though he is, is much respected, and it is known that I have done all his family. (*Letter* 575)

By the way—only yesterday our friend Roulin came to see me. . . . But for me, who am perpetually learning from him, what a lesson for the future it is when one gathers from his talk that life does not grow any easier as one gets on in life. . . .

It seems to me that there was a good article in the *Figaro* on Monet; Roulin had read it and been struck by it, he said. . . .

Roulin, though he is not quite old enough to be like a father to me, has all the same a silent gravity and tenderness for me like what an old soldier might have for a young one. All the time—but without a word—a something which seems to say, we do not know what will happen to us tomorrow, but whatever it may be, think of me. And it does one good when it comes from a man who is neither embittered, nor sad, nor perfect, nor happy, nor always irreproachably right. But such a good soul and so wise and so full of feeling and so trustful. (*Letter* 583)

29. Shoes

Oil on canvas, 18 x 21½ inches
Painted August, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 461 (*Les souliers*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

. . . I have also a bunch of flowers on hand, and a still-life of an old pair of shoes.

(*Letter* 529)



30. Sunflowers

Oil on canvas, 24 x 39½ inches
Painted August, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 452 (*Fleurs de tournesols*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

I am hard at it, painting with the enthusiasm of a Marseillais eating bouillabaisse, which won't surprise you when you know that what I'm at is the painting of some great sunflowers.

I have three canvases on hand—1st, three huge flowers in a green vase, with a light background, a canvas of 15; 2nd, three flowers, one gone to seed, one in flower, and the third a bud against a royal blue background, canvas of 25; 3rd, twelve flowers and buds in a yellow vase (canvas of 30). The last is therefore light on light, and I hope will be the best. I probably shall not stop at that. Now that I hope to live with Gauguin in a studio of our own, I want to make decorations for the studio. Nothing but big flowers. . . .

If I carry out this idea there will be a dozen panels. So the whole thing will be a symphony in blue and yellow. I am working at it every morning from sunrise, for the flowers fade so soon, and the thing is to do the whole at a flash. (*Letter* 526)

I'm thinking of decorating my studio with half a dozen pictures of *Sunflowers*, a decoration in which the crude or broken chrome yellows will burst forth from backgrounds of different blues ranging from the palest *Veronese* to *royal blue*, framed with narrow strips painted *orange*. (*To Bernard, letter* 19)



31. Sunflowers

Oil on canvas, 36¼ x 28⅞ inches
Painted August, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 455 (*Les tournesols*)
Collection Carroll S. Tyson, Jr., Philadelphia
Illustrated opposite

But if you like you can exhibit the two pictures of sunflowers.

Gauguin would be glad to have one, and I should very much like to give Gauguin a real pleasure. So if he wants one of the two canvases, all right, I will do one of them over again, whichever he likes.

You will see that these canvases catch the eye. But I would advise you to keep them for yourself, just for your own private pleasure, you and your wife.

It is a kind of painting that changes rather to the eye, and takes on a richness the longer you look at it.

Besides you know Gauguin liked them extraordinarily. He said to me among other things —"That . . . it's . . . the flower."

You know that the peony is Jeannin's, the hollyhock belongs to Quost, but the sunflower is mine in a way. (*Letter* 573)

32. Sunflowers

Oil on canvas, 38 x 29 inches
Painted August, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 458 (*Fleurs soleils*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam

Not illustrated
Other paintings of sunflowers are in the museums of Munich, London and Tokio

I am now at the fourth picture of sunflowers. This fourth is a bunch of 14 flowers, against a yellow background, like a still-life of quinces and lemons that I did some time ago.

Only as it is much bigger, it gives a rather singular effect, and I think that this one is painted with more simplicity than the quinces and lemons. (*Letter* 527)

I have good and ill luck in my turn out, but not ill luck only. For instance, if our Monticelli bunch of flowers is worth 500 francs to a collector, and it is, then I dare swear to you that my sunflowers are worth 500 francs too to one of these Scotch or Americans.

Now to get up heat enough to melt that gold, those flower-tones, it isn't the first comer who can do it, it needs the force and concentration of a single individual whole and entire. . . . (*Letter* 573)



33. Van Gogh's House at Arles

Oil on canvas, 28½ x 36¼ inches
Painted September, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 464 (*La maison de Vincent à Arles*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Illustrated opposite

You shall have a picture some day or other of the little house itself in bright sunshine, or else with the window lit up, and a starry sky. (*Letter* 534)

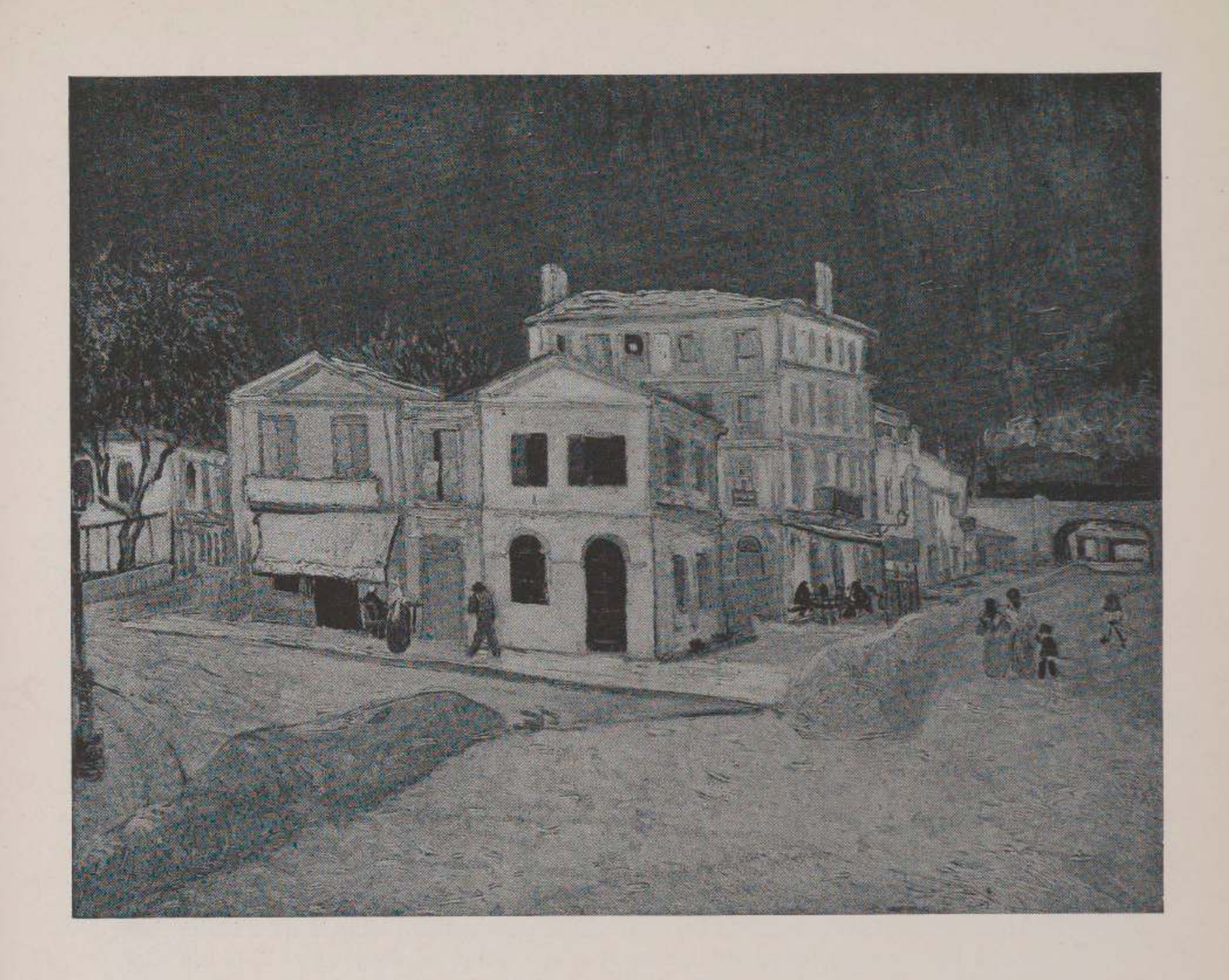
. . . a stretch of a canvas of 30 representing the house and its surroundings in sulphur-coloured sunshine, under a sky of pure cobalt. The subject is frightfully difficult; but that is just why I want to conquer it. It's terrific, these houses, yellow in the sun, and the incomparable freshness of the blue. And all the ground is yellow too. I shall send you a better drawing than this rough sketch out of my head later on. The house on the left is pink with violet shutters, I mean the one in the shadow of the tree.

That is the restaurant where I go for dinner every day. My friend the postman lives at the end of the road to the left between the two railway bridges. The night café I painted is not in the picture, it is to the left of the restaurant.

Milliet thinks this horrible, but I need not tell you, that when he says he cannot understand anyone amusing himself doing such a dull grocer's shop, and stark, stiff houses with no grace whatever, I think to myself that Zola did a certain boulevard at the beginning of *L'Assommoir*, and Flaubert a corner of the Quai de la Villette in the midst of the dog days at the beginning of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, and neither of them are junk yet.

And it does me good to do difficult things. That does not prevent me having a terrible need of—shall I say the word—of religion. Then I go out at night to paint the stars, and I dream always of a picture like this with a group of living figures of our own crowd.

(*Letter* 543)



34. Night Café

Oil on canvas, 29 x 35 inches
Painted September, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 463 (*Le café de nuit* [café de l'Alcazar, Place Lamartine])
Private Collection, New York
Illustrated opposite

Today I am probably going to begin the interior of the Café where I eat, by gas light, in the evening.

It is what they call here a *Café de Nuit* (they are fairly frequent here) staying open all night. Night prowlers can take refuge there when they have no money to pay for a lodging, or are too tight to be taken to one. (*Letter* 518)

. . . Just because I am always bowed down under this difficulty of paying my landlord, I made up my mind to take it gaily. I swore at the said landlord, who after all isn't a bad fellow, and told him that to revenge myself for paying him so much money for nothing, I would paint the whole of his rotten shanty so as to repay myself. Then to the great joy of the landlord, of the postman whom I had already painted, of the visiting night prowlers, and of myself, for three nights running I sat up to paint and went to bed during the day. I often think that the night is more alive and more richly coloured than the day. Now, as for getting back the money I have paid to the landlord by my painting, I do not dwell on that, for the picture is one of the ugliest I have done.

I have tried to express the terrible passions of humanity by means of red and green.

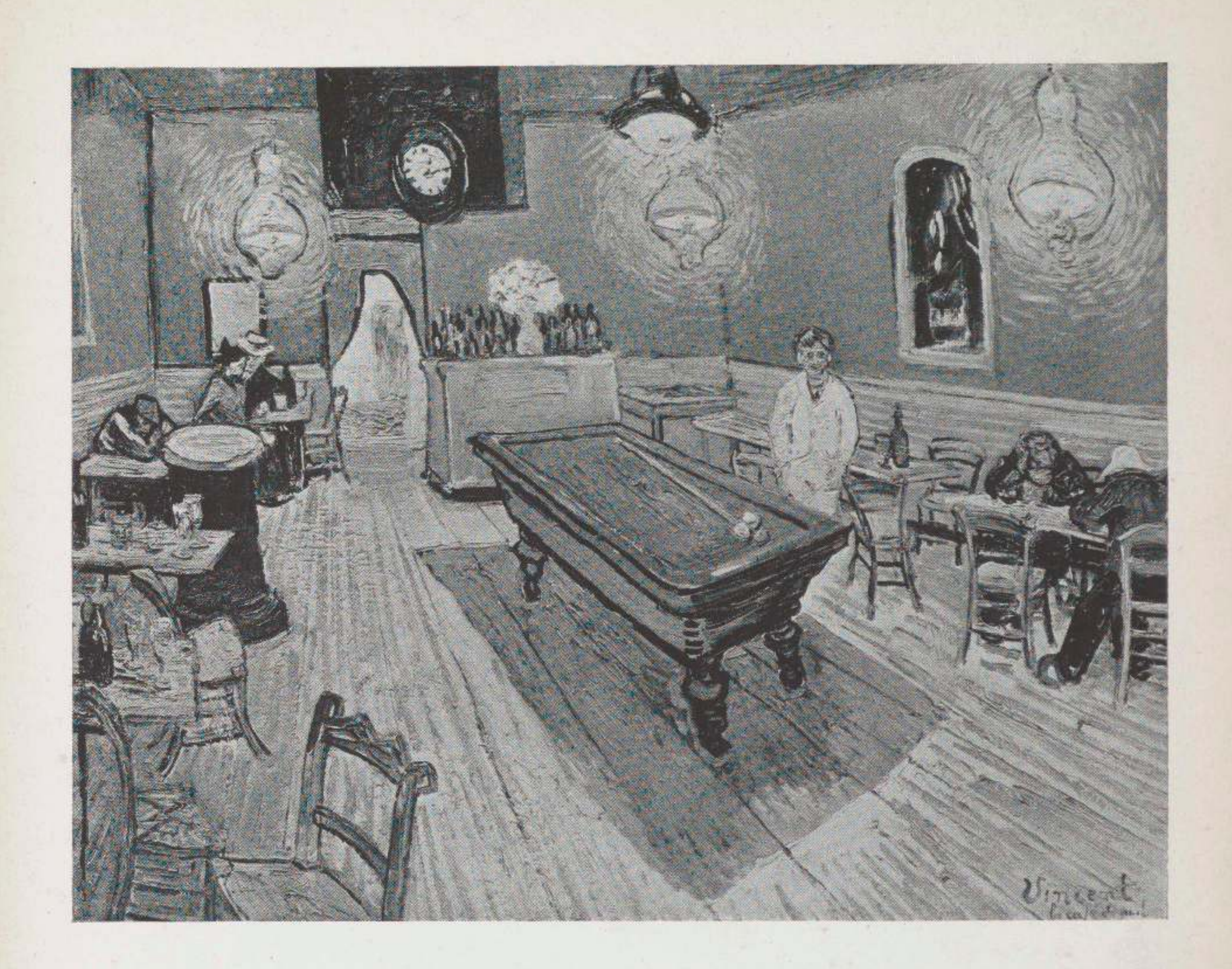
The room is blood red and dark yellow with a green billiard table in the middle; there are four lemon yellow lamps with a glow of orange and green. Everywhere there is a clash and contrast of the most alien reds and greens in the figures of the little sleeping hooligans, in the empty dreary room, in violet and blue. The blood red and the yellow green of the billiard table for instance contrast with the soft tender Louis XV green of the counter on which there is a nosegay in rose colour. The white coat of the patron, on vigil in a corner of this furnace, turns lemon yellow, or pale luminous green.

I am making a drawing of it with the tones in watercolour, to send to you tomorrow to give you some idea of it. . . .

It is colour not locally true from the point of view of the stereoscopic realist, but colour to suggest any emotion of an ardent temperament. (*Letter* 533)

In my picture of the "Night Café" I have tried to express the idea that the café is a place where one can ruin one's self, run mad, or commit a crime. So I have tried to express as it were the powers of darkness in a low drink shop, by soft Louis XV green and malachite, contrasting with yellow green and hard blue greens, and all this in an atmosphere like a devil's furnace, of pale sulphur.

(*Continued on following page*)



And all this under an appearance of Japanese gaiety, and the good nature of Tartarin. But what would Monsieur Tersteeg say about this picture when he said before a Sisley—Sisley the most discreet and gentle of the impressionists—"I cannot help thinking that the artist who painted that was a bit tipsy." If he saw my picture he would say that it was delirium tremens in full career. (*Letter* 534)

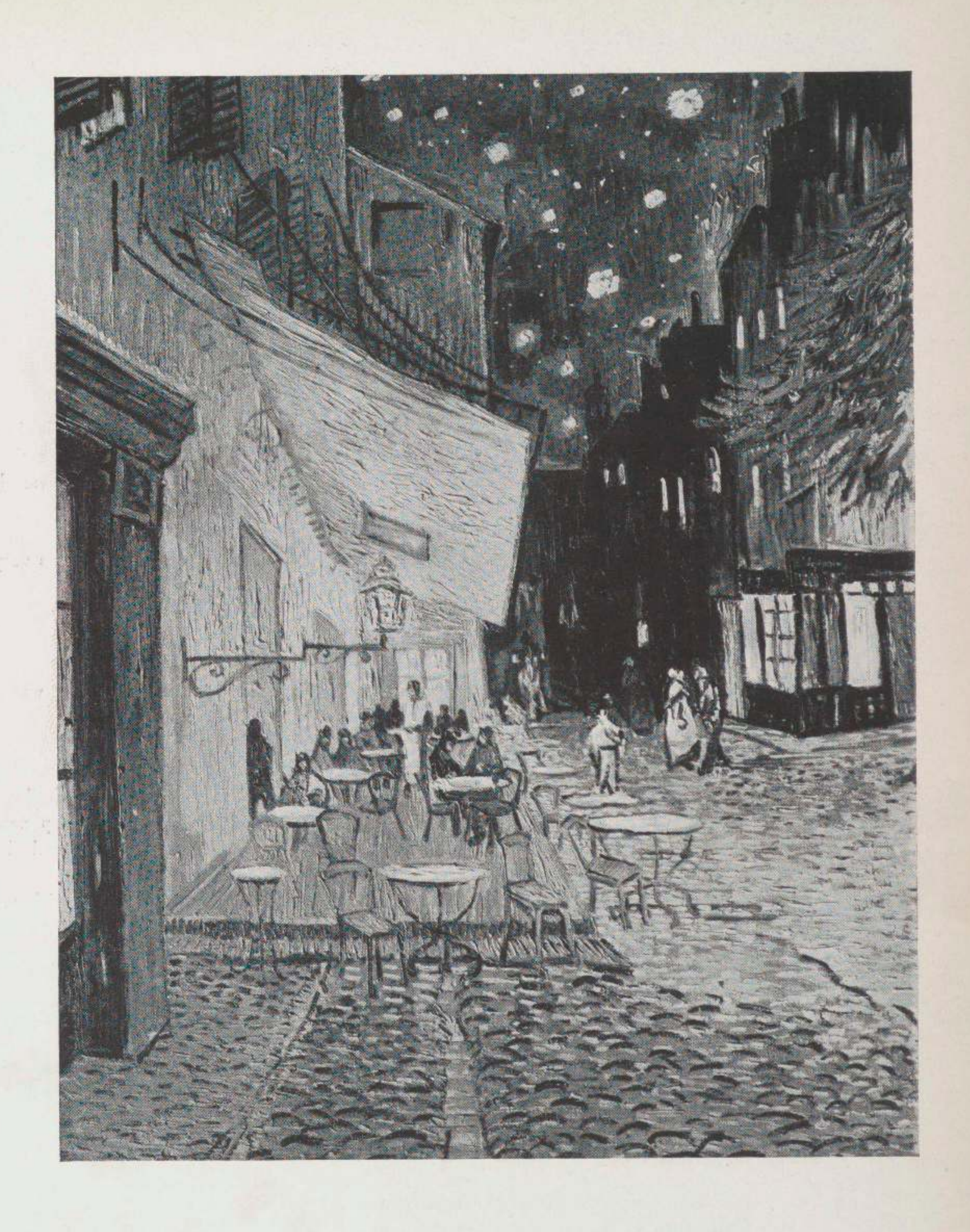
Exaggerated studies like the "Sower," and like this "Night Café," seem to me usually atrociously ugly and bad, but when I am moved by something, as now by this little article on Dostoievsky, then these are the only ones which appear to have any deep meaning. (*Letter* 535)

35. Outdoor Café at Night

Oil on canvas, 32¼ x 26 inches
Painted September, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 467 (*Le café, le soir*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

The second represents the outside of a café, with the terrace lit up by a big gas lamp in the blue night, and a corner of starry blue sky. . . .

The problem of painting night scenes and effects on the spot and actually by night interests me enormously. (*Letter* 537)



36. Van Gogh's Bedroom at Arles

Oil on canvas, 28⅝ x 36⅛ inches
Painted October, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 482 (*Chambre à coucher*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Illustrated opposite
Another version of the *Bedroom* is in the Art Institute of Chicago, Birch-Bartlett collection

I had a new idea in my head and here is the sketch of it. Another canvas of 30. This time it's just simply my bedroom, only here colour is to do everything, and giving by its simplification a grander style to things, is to be suggestive here of *rest* or of sleep in general. In a word, to look at the picture ought to rest the brain or rather the imagination.

The walls are pale violet. The ground is of red tiles.

The wood of the bed and chairs is the yellow of fresh butter, the sheets and pillows very light greenish lemon.

The coverlet scarlet. The window green.

The toilet table orange, the basin blue. The doors lilac.

And that is all—there is nothing in this room with closed shutters.

The broad lines of the furniture again must express inviolable rest. Portraits on the walls, and a mirror and a towel and some clothes.

The frame—as there is no white in the picture—will be white.

This by way of revenge for the enforced rest I was obliged to take.

I shall work at it again all day, but you see how simple the conception is. The shadows and the shadows thrown are suppressed, it is painted in free flat washes like the Japanese prints. It is going to be a contrast with, for instance, the Tarascon diligence and the night café. . . .

Tomorrow very early I am going to begin in the cool morning light, so as to finish my canvas. (*Letter* 554)

I am adding a line to tell you that this afternoon I finished the canvas representing the bedroom. . . .

No stippling, no hatching, nothing, only flat colours in harmony. (*Letter* 555)

When I saw my canvases again after my illness the one that seemed the best to me was the bedroom. (*Letter* 573)

36A. Original letter to Theo

No. 554, with a sketch of the *Bedroom*
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Not illustrated



37. Avenue with Tombs

Oil on canvas, 28¾ x 36½ inches
Painted November, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 486 (*Les Aliscamps*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar

Illustrated opposite

Les Aliscamps (Elysian Fields, from Latin *Elysii Campi*) was a Gallo-Roman cemetery at Arles which rose to great size and importance in the Middle Ages and was ransacked during the Renaissance. A few tombs remain.

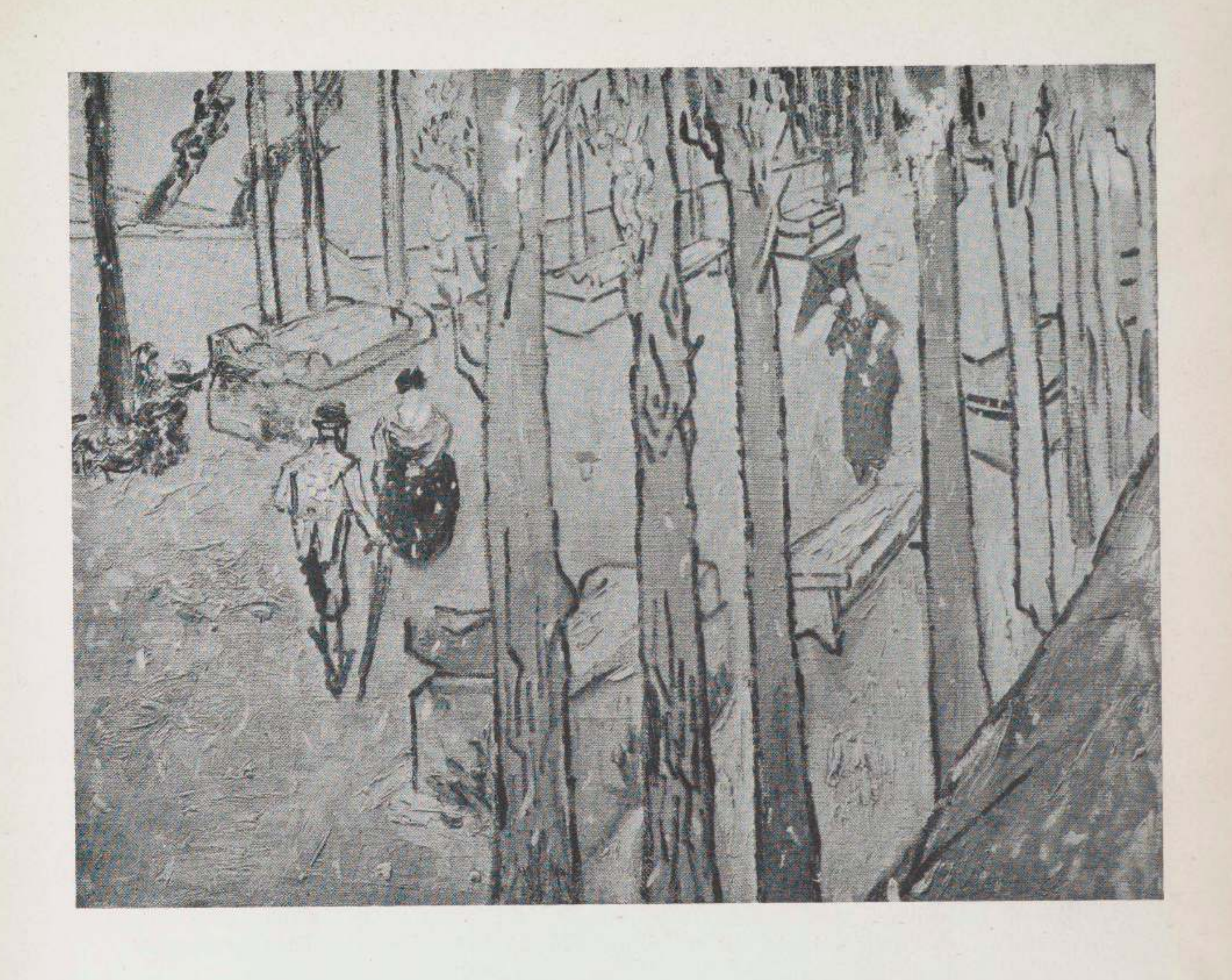
I have done two canvases of autumn, which Gauguin liked I think. . . .

I think you will like the fall of the leaf that I have done.

It is some poplar trunks in lilac cut by the frame where the leaves begin. These tree-trunks are lined like pillars along an avenue where right and left there are rows of old Roman tombs of a blue lilac. And then the soil is covered, as with a carpet, by a thick layer of yellow and orange fallen leaves. And they are still falling like flakes of snow.

And in the avenue little black figures of lovers. The upper part of the picture is a bright green meadow, and no sky or almost none.

The second canvas is the same avenue but with an old fellow and a woman as fat and round as a ball. (*Letter* 559)



38. Self Portrait

Oil on canvas, 25¾ x 19½ inches
Painted, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 522 (*Portrait de lui-même*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Illustrated opposite

39. L'Arlésienne (Madame Ginoux)

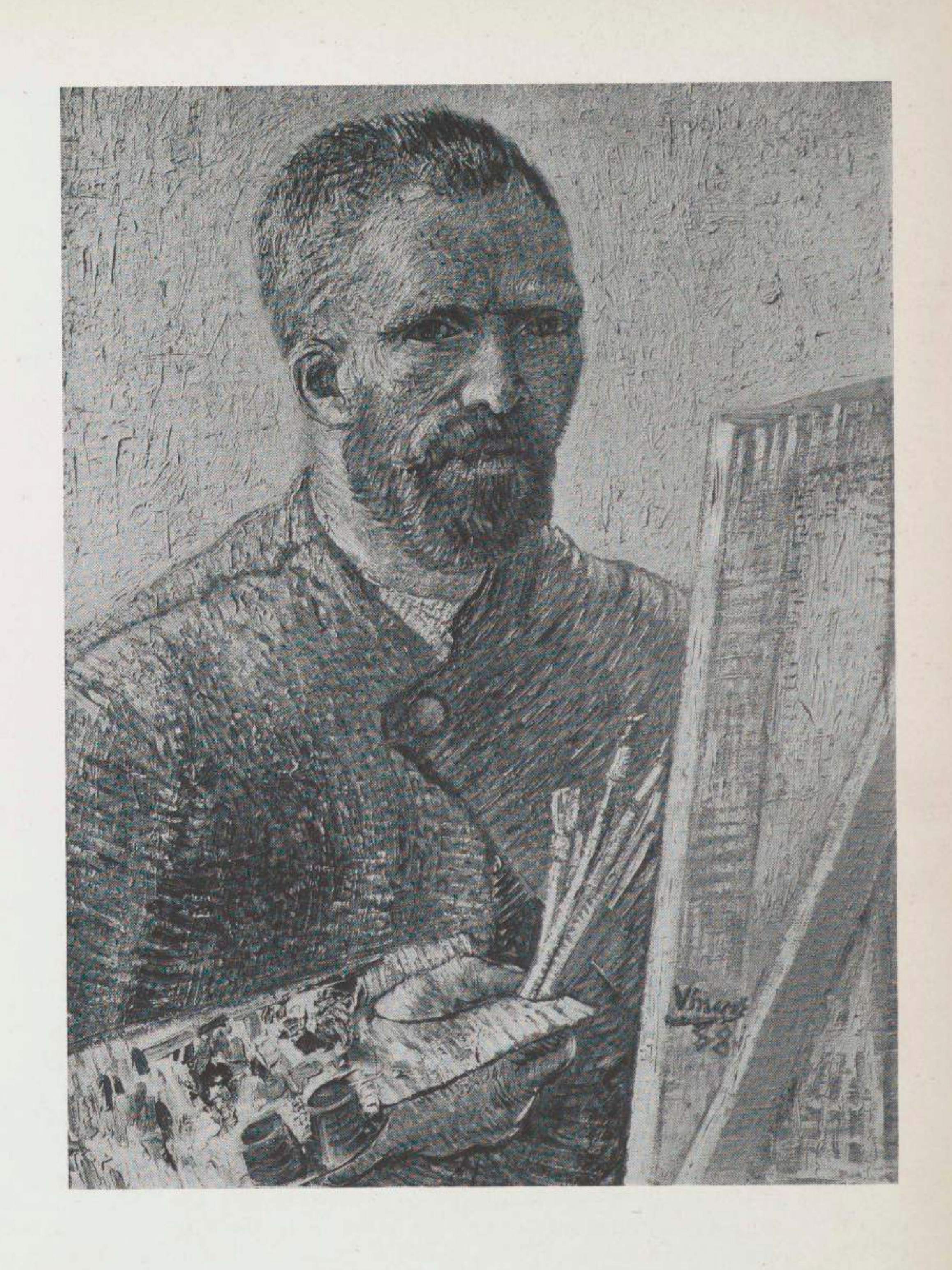
Oil on canvas, 36 x 29 inches
Painted November, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 488 (*L'Arlésienne*)
The Adolph Lewisohn Collection, New York
See frontispiece for illustration

Then I have an Arlésienne at last, a figure (30 canvas) slashed on in an hour, background pale lemon, the face grey, the clothes black, black, black, with perfectly raw Prussian blue. She is leaning on a green table and seated in an armchair of orange wood. (*Letter* 559)

Did you during your hasty visit see the portrait of Mme. Ginoux in black and yellow? That portrait was painted in three-quarters of an hour. (*Letter* 573)

He [Isaäcson] and de Haan seem very faithful, and that is rare enough in these days for one to appreciate it. And I am pleased too to hear that someone else has turned up who actually saw something in the woman's figure, in black and yellow. That does not surprise me, though I think that the merit is in the model and not in my painting.

I despair of ever finding models. Ah, if I had now and then someone like that or like the woman who posed for the "Woman Rocking," I should do something very different. (*Letter* 595)



40. Woman Rocking a Cradle (Madame Roulin)

Oil on canvas, 36⅜ x 28¾ inches
Painted January-February, 1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 504 (*La Berceuse* [*Mme. Roulin*])
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite
Another version is in the Art Institute of Chicago, Birch-Bartlett collection

I have in hand the portrait of Roulin's wife, which I was working on before I was ill.

In it I have ranged the reds from rose to orange, which rises through the yellows to lemon, with light and sombre greens. If I could finish it, I should be very glad, but I am afraid she will not want to pose with her husband away. (*Letter* 573)

I think I have already told you that . . . I have a canvas of the "Woman Rocking a Cradle," the very one I was working on when my illness interrupted me. I have two copies now of that as well.

I have just been saying to Gauguin about this picture that when he and I were talking about the Icelandic fishermen and of their mournful isolation, exposed to all dangers, alone on the sad sea, I have just been saying to Gauguin that following those intimate talks of ours, the idea came to me to paint such a picture, that sailors, who are at once children and martyrs, seeing it in the cabin of their boat should feel the old sense of cradling come over them and remember their own lullabys.

Now, if you please, it's like a chromolithograph from a cheap shop. A woman in green with orange hair stands out against a background of green with pink flowers. Now these discordant sharps of crude pink, crude orange, and crude green are softened by flats of red and green.

I picture to myself these same canvases between those of the sunflowers, which would thus form lamp brackets or candelabra beside them, the same size. . . . (*Letter* 574)

When Roulin came I had just finished the duplicate of my sunflowers, and I showed him the two copies of the "Woman Rocking a Cradle" between the four bunches of flowers . . . which pleased him well.

I have in hand today a third "Woman Rocking a Cradle." I know very well that it is neither drawn nor painted as correctly as a Bouguereau, and I am rather sorry, because I have an earnest desire to be correct. But though it is doomed alas to be neither a Cabanel nor a Bouguereau, I yet hope that it will be French. (*Letter* 575)

I have done the "Woman Rocking the Cradle" three times, and as Mme. Roulin was the model and I only the painter, I let her choose between the three, her and her husband, but on condition that I should make another duplicate for myself of the one she chose, and I have this in hand now. . . .

(*Continued on following page*)



In its words the language native to this place is extraordinarily musical in the mouth of an Arlésienne.

Perhaps in the "Woman Rocking" there's an attempt to get all the *music* of the colour here. It is badly painted and the chromos in the little shops are infinitely better painted technically, but all the same. (*Letter* 576)

. . . So far I am sleeping and eating at the hospital. Yesterday and today I began to work. When Mme. Roulin left too to go and live temporarily with her mother in the country, she took the "Woman Rocking" with her. I had a sketch of it and two duplicates. She had a good eye and took the best, only I am doing it again at the moment and I do not want it to be inferior.

In reply to Mourier's letter, which gave me pleasure, if Gauguin likes to exchange with you for a copy of the "Woman Rocking" he can send it to his wife in Denmark, and in this way I would willingly see a canvas of mine going there. But as I have told you already this canvas may be unintelligible. (*Letter* 578)

What you say about the "Woman Rocking" pleases me; it is very true that the common people, who are content with chromos and melt when they hear a barrel organ, are in some vague way right, perhaps more sincere than certain men about town who go to the Salon.

Gauguin, if he will accept it, give him the copy of the "Woman Rocking" which was not mounted on a stretcher, and another to Bernard as a token of friendship.

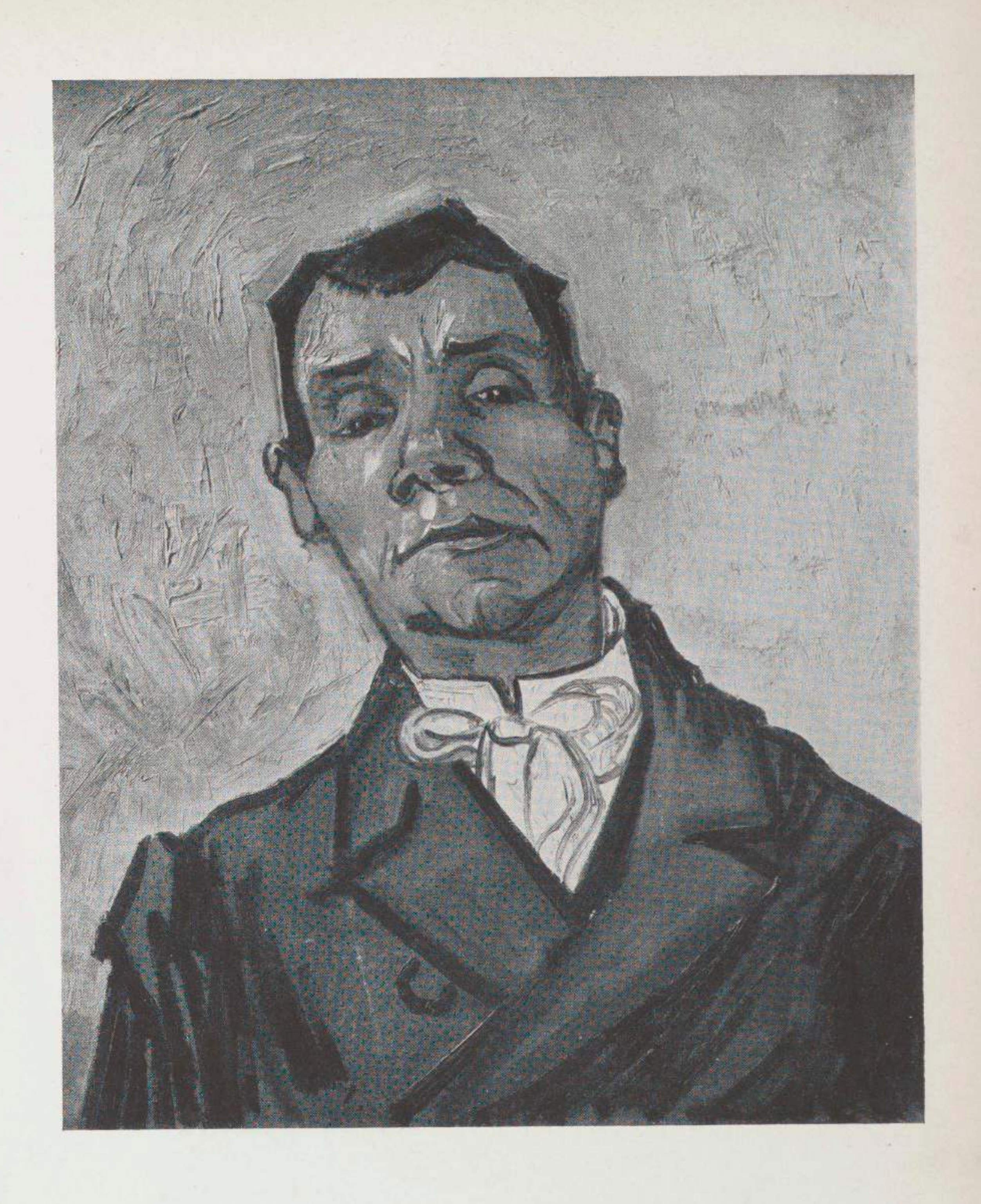
You must realize that if you arrange them this way, say the "Woman Rocking" in the middle and the two canvases of sunflowers to right and left, it makes a sort of triptych.

And then the yellow and orange tones of the head will gain more brilliance by the proximity of the yellow wings.

And then you will understand what I wrote you, that my idea had been to make a decoration as it might be for instance for the end of a cabin in a ship. Then, as the size increases, the summary workmanship is justified. The frame for the center is the red one. And the two sunflowers which go with it, are the ones framed in narrow strips. (*Letter* 592)

41. Portrait of an Actor

Oil on canvas, 26 x 21½ inches
Perhaps painted 1888-1889. Possibly of the Paris period
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 533 (*Portrait d'acteur*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

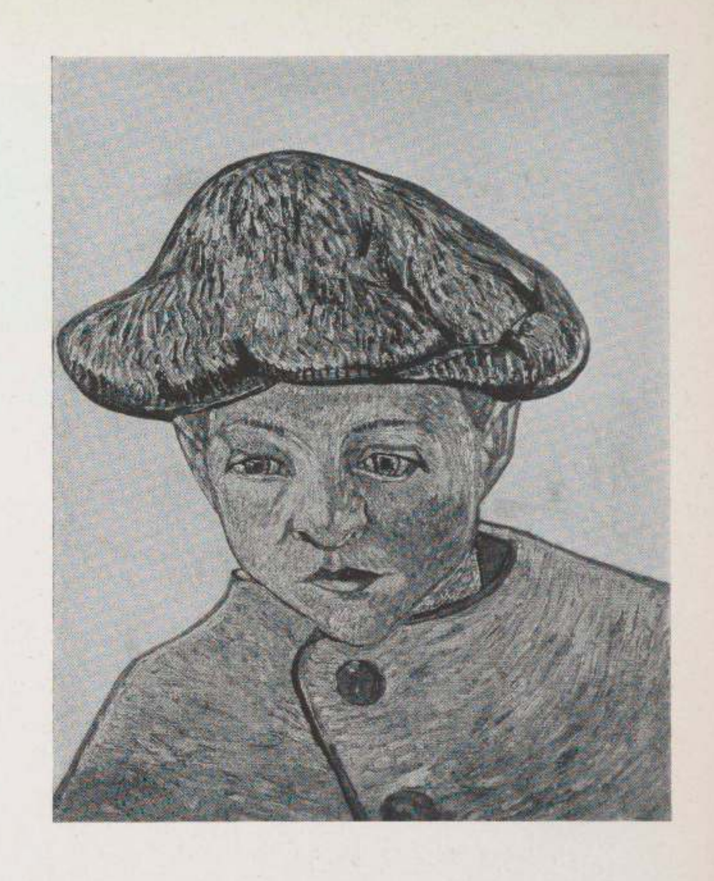


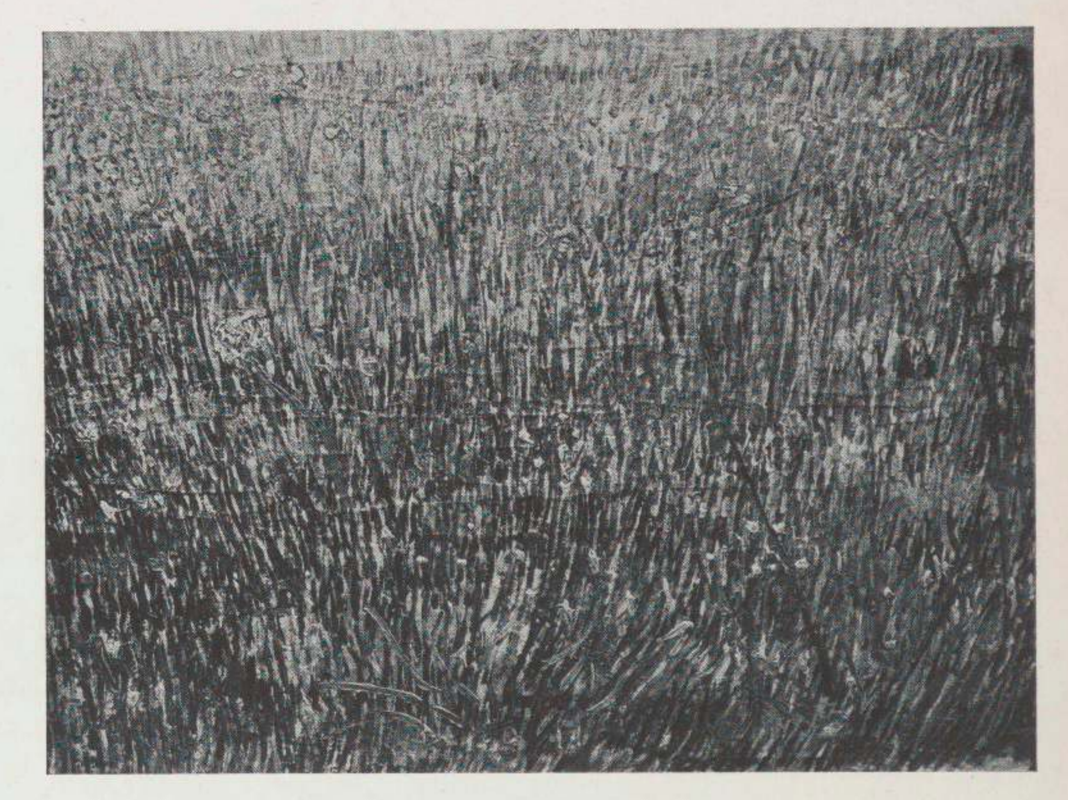
42. Head of Boy

Oil on canvas, 17 x 13⅞ inches
Painted 1888-1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 537 (*Tête de garçon*)
Collection Josef Stransky. Courtesy Worcester Art Museum
Illustrated opposite

43. Grass

Oil on canvas, 12⅝ x 16 inches
Perhaps painted 1888-1889. Possibly of the Paris period
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 583 (*Coin de Prairie*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite





44. L'Arlésienne (after a drawing by Paul Gauguin)

Oil on canvas, 26 x 21½ inches
Painted 1888-1889. Possibly Saint-Rémy, 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 543 (*L'Arlésienne [d'après un dessin de Paul Gauguin]*)
Collection Dr. and Mrs. Harry Bakwin, New York. *Illustrated opposite*

by Paul Gauguin
44A. L'Arlésienne

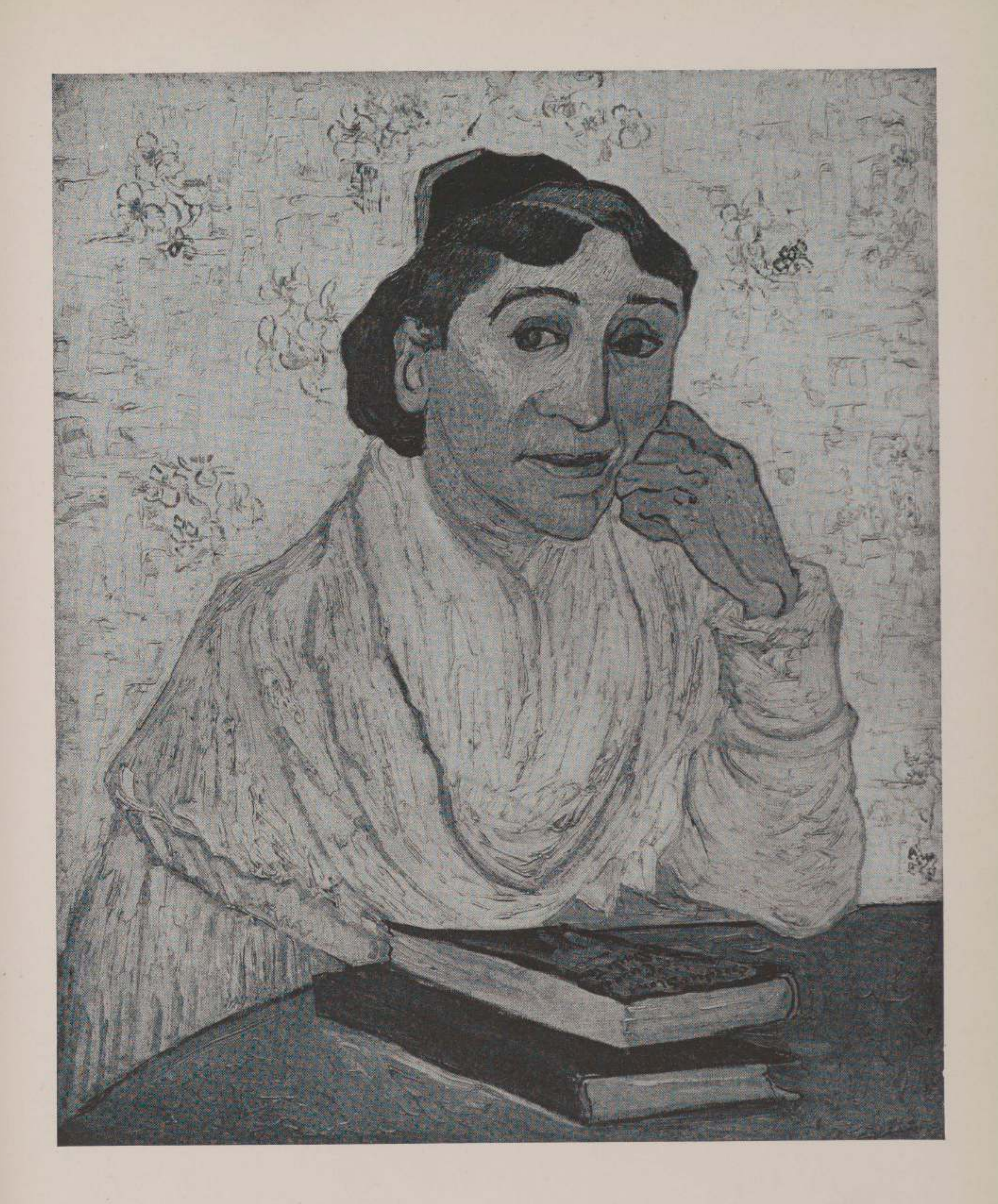
Drawn at Arles, 1888
Crayon and chalk, 22 x 19 inches
Collection Dr. F. H. Hirschland, New York



I have seen here figures quite as beautiful as those of Goya or Velasquez. They will pin you a touch of rose on a black frock, or devise a garment of white, yellow and rose, or else green and rose, or else *blue and yellow*, in which there is nothing to be altered from the artistic point of view. (*Letter* 481)

Saint-Rémy, May, 1890:
I should still have at my disposal the model who posed for the "Woman Rocking the Cradle," and the other whose portrait after Gauguin's drawing you have just received, and I shall certainly try to carry it out in large size, this canvas, as the personalities are the characters of my dreams. (*Letter* 632)

(*Continued on following page*)



Arles Period

Auvers, June, 1890:

What did Gauguin say of the last portrait of the Arlésienne, which is done after his drawing? You will see in the end, I think, that this is one of the least bad things I have done. (*Letter* 638)

Written to Gauguin from Auvers, June, 1890:

. . . And it gives me enormous pleasure when you say the Arlésienne's portrait which was founded strictly on your drawing is to your liking.

I tried to be religiously faithful to your drawing while nevertheless taking the liberty of interpreting by the medium of colour the sober character and the style of the drawing in question. It is a synthesis of the Arlésiennes if you like; as syntheses of the Arlésiennes are rare, take this as a work belonging to you and me as a summary of our months of work together. For the doing of it I have paid for my part with another month of illness, but I also know that it is a canvas which will be understood by you, and very few others, as we would wish it to be understood. My friend Dr. Gachet here has taken to it altogether after two or three hesitations, and says "How difficult it is to be simple." Very well—I want to underline the thing again by engraving it as an etching, then let it be. Anyone who likes can have it. (*Letter* 643)

45. Restaurant at Arles

Oil on canvas, 21¼ x 25⅜ inches
Painted 1888-1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 549 (*Restaurant Carrel à Arles* [*rue de la Cavalerie*])
Collection Mrs. Murray S. Danforth, Providence
Illustrated opposite



Arles Period

46. The House on the Crau

Oil on canvas, 25⅝ x 19¾ inches
Painted 1888-1889
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 550 (*Le maison de la Crau*)
Private Collection, New York
Illustrated opposite



47. Bouquet

Oil on canvas, 25¼ x 21 inches
Painted 1888-1889
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 558 (*Le bouquet*)
Collection Marie Harriman Gallery, New York
Illustrated opposite



48. Cornfield with a Reaper

Oil on canvas, 29 x 36½ inches
Painted June, 1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 617 (*Champ de blé*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

So that you should have some idea of what I have in hand, I am sending you a dozen drawings today, all from canvases in hand.

The latest begun is the "Cornfield", in which there is a little reaper and a big sun. The canvas is all yellow except for the wall and the background of violet tinted hills.

. . . The cornfield in the sun, which represents the extreme heat, [is] very thick. . . .

The canvas of the "Mower" is going to be something like the "Sower" of last year.

(*Letter* 597)

I am struggling with a canvas begun some days before my indisposition, a "Mower," the study is all yellow, terribly thickly painted, but the subject was fine and simple. For I see in this mower—a vague figure fighting like a devil in the midst of the heat to get to the end of his task—I see the image of death, in the sense that humanity might be the corn he is reaping. So it is—if you like—the opposite to that sower I tried to do before. But there's nothing sad in this death, it goes its way in broad daylight with a sun flooding everything with a light of pure gold. . . .

There! The "Reaper" is finished, I think it will be one of those you keep at home—it is an image of death as the great book of nature speaks of it—but what I have tried for is the "almost smiling." It is all yellow, except a line of violet hills, a pale fair yellow. I find it queer that I saw it like this between the iron bars of a cell.

Well, do you know what I hope, as soon as I let myself begin to hope? It is that a family will be for you what nature, the clods of earth, the grass, the yellow corn, the peasant, are for me, that is to say that you may find in your love for people something *not only to work for*, but to console and restore you when there is need. (*Letter* 604)



49. Cypresses

Oil on canvas, 36¾ x 29 inches
Painted June, 1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 620 (*Les cyprès*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

. . . Ideas I have none, except to think that a field of corn or a cypress is well worth the trouble of looking at close to. . . .

The cypresses are always occupying my thoughts, I would like to make something of them like the canvases of the sunflowers, because it astonishes me that they have not yet been done as I see them.

It is as beautiful in line and proportion as an Egyptian obelisk. And the green has a quality of such distinction.

It is a splash of *black* in a sunny landscape, but it is one of the most interesting of the black notes, and the most difficult to strike exactly, that I can imagine.

But then you must see them against the blue, *in* the blue rather. (*Letter* 596)

I have a canvas of cypresses with some ears of corn, some poppies, a blue sky like a piece of Scotch plaid . . . painted with a thick *pâte* like the Monticellis. . . . (*Letter* 597)

. . . Landscapes with cypresses! Ah, it would not be easy. Aurier feels it too, when he says that even black is a colour, and as for their appearance of flame—I think about it, but don't dare to go further, and I say with the cautious Isaäcson—I do not feel yet that we have got to that. You need a certain dash of inspiration, a ray from on high, that is not in ourselves, in order to do beautiful things. When I had done those sunflowers, I looked for the opposite and yet the equivalent and I said—it is the cypress. (*Letter* 625)

50. Cypresses

Oil on canvas, 17⅛ x 10⅞
Painted June, 1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 621 (*Les cyprès*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Not illustrated

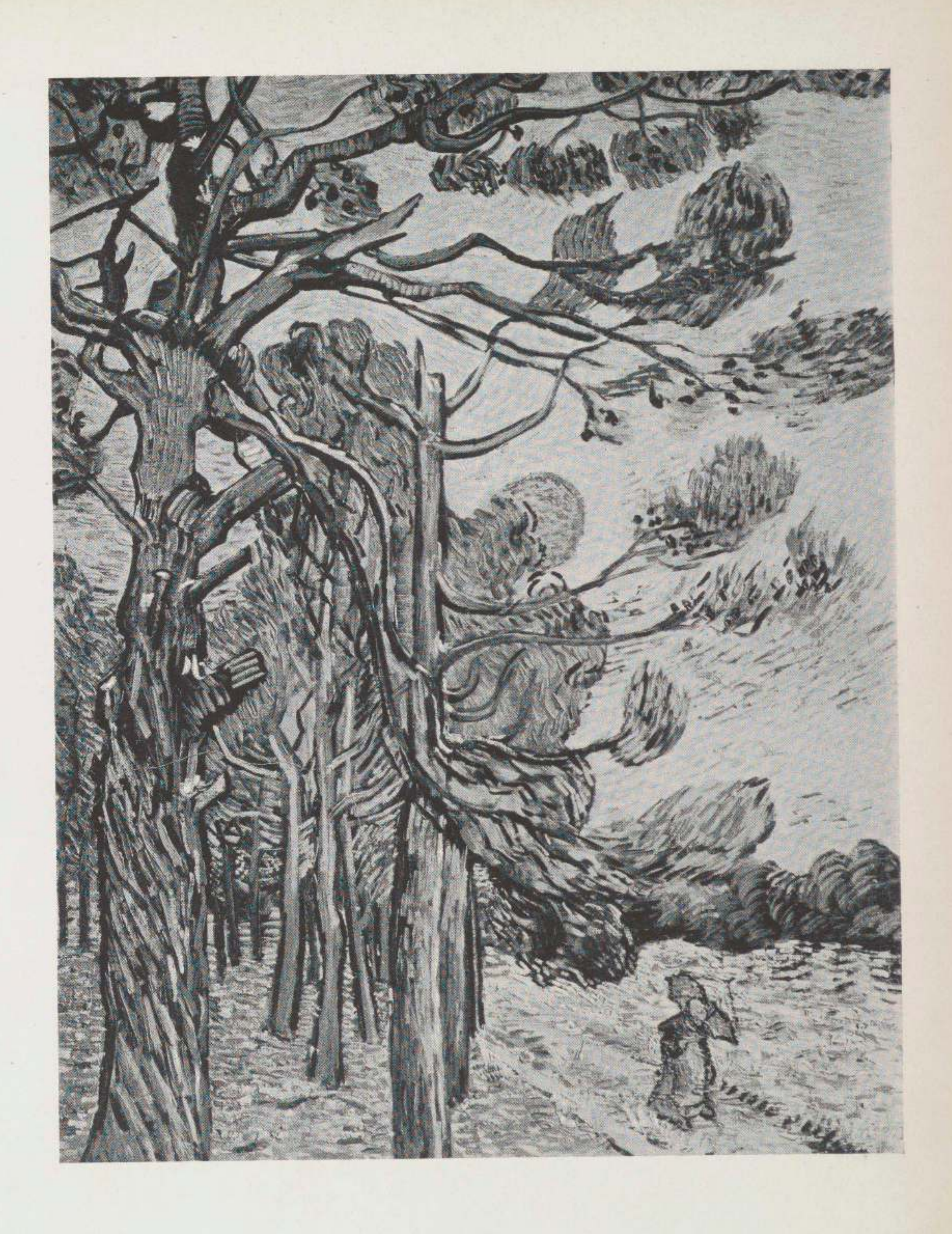


51. Pine Trees

Oil on canvas, 36½ x 29 inches
Painted November, 1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 652 (*Forêt de sapins au déclin du jour*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

. . . An evening effect with some big pines.

. . . You will see that in a big landscape with some pines, trunks of red ochre defined by a black stroke, there is already more character than in the previous ones. (*Letter* 613)



52. Rain

Oil on canvas, 29 x 36⅜ inches
Painted November, 1889
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 650 (*Effet de pluie*)
Collection Paul Rosenberg, Paris
Illustrated opposite

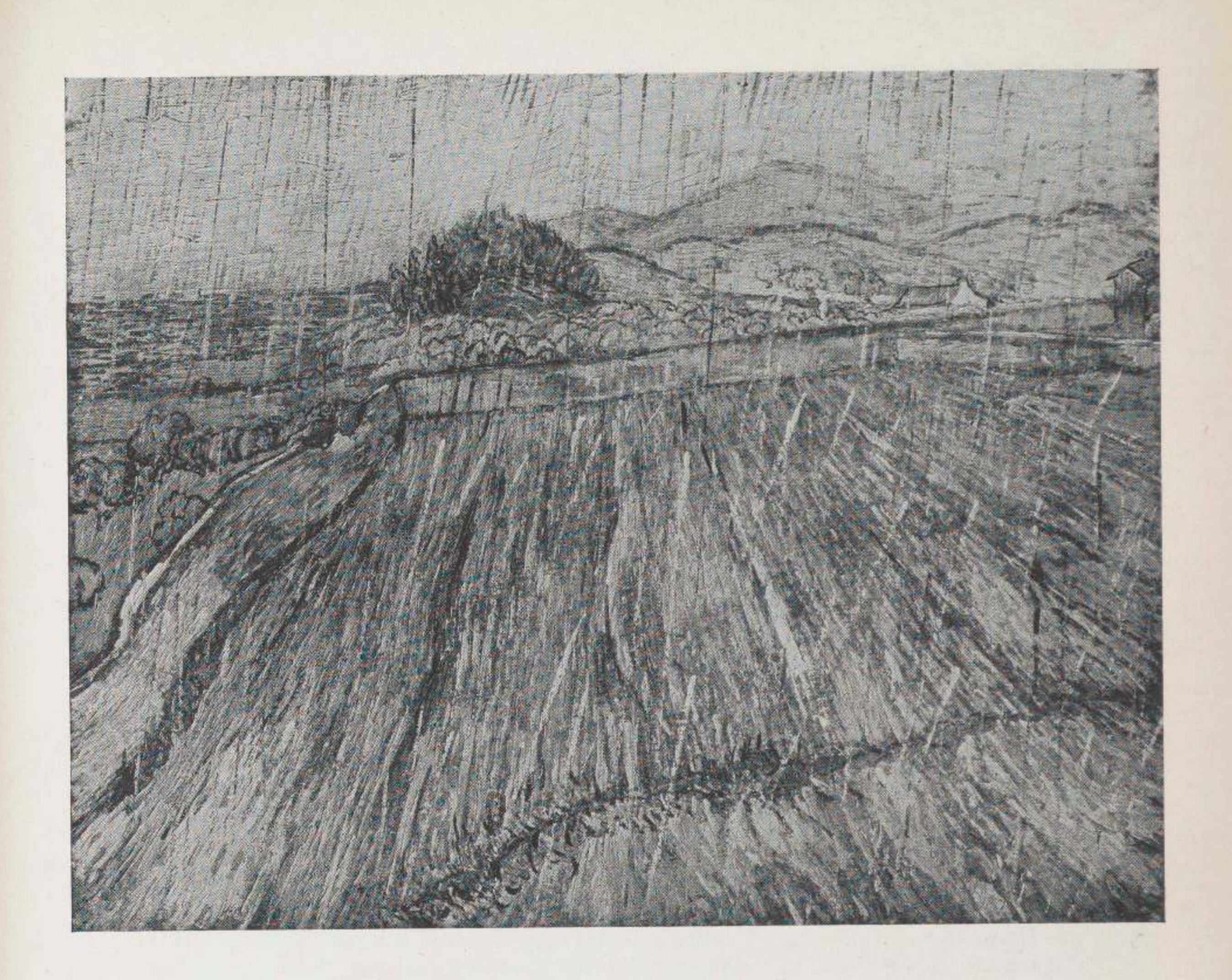
. . . I have a rain effect in hand. . . . (*Letter* 613)

Written at The Hague, August, 1882, about seven years before this painting:
How beautiful it is outside when everything is wet from the rain—before—in—and after the rain. I ought not to let one single shower pass. (*Letter* 227)

53. Field of Poppies

Oil on canvas, 28¾ x 36½ inches
Painted October, 1889
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 636 (*Champ de pavots*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated

. . . There are three studies missing in the parcel of canvases you already have . . . they are leaving today with other canvases. . . . Poppies—Night effect—Moonrise. (*Letter* 608)



54. The Good Samaritan (after Delacroix)

Oil on canvas, 28¾ x 23⅝ inches
Painted October, 1889–May, 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 633 (*Le bon Samaritain* [*d'après E. Delacroix*])
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

I can assure you that it interests me enormously to make copies. . . .

It is a kind of study that I need, for I want to learn. Although copying may be the *old* system, that makes absolutely no difference to me. I am going to copy the "Good Samaritan" by Delacroix. . . .

What I am seeking in it and why it seems good to me to copy. . . . I am going to try to tell you. We painters are always asked to *compose* of ourselves and *not to be only compositors.*

So be it—but in music it is not like that—and if some person or other plays Beethoven he adds his personal interpretation—in music and more especially in singing—the *interpretation* of a composer is something, and it is not a hard and fast rule that only the composer should play his own composition.

Very good—and I, mostly because I am at present ill, I am trying to do something to console myself, for my own pleasure.

I pose the black and white of Delacroix or Millet or something taken from them before me as a subject.

And then I improvise colour on it, not, you understand, altogether as myself, but searching for memories of *their* pictures—but the memory, "the vague consonance of colours which are right in feeling at least"—that is my own interpretation.

Heaps of people do not copy, heaps of others copy—I started it by chance and I find that it teaches me things and above all it sometimes gives me consolation. And then my brush goes between my fingers as a bow would on the violin and absolutely for my pleasure.

(*Letter* 607)



55. Ravine

Oil on canvas, 28¾ x 36¼ inches
Painted December, 1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 661 (*Le ravin*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar

Illustrated opposite

I have a sterner study than the previous one of the mountains. A very wild ravine where a small stream winds its way along its bed of rocks.

It is all violet. I could certainly do a whole series of these Alps, for having seen them now for a long time I am more up to it. (*Letter* 610)

For the moment I am working at a picture of a path between the mountains and a little brook, thrusting on between the stones. The rocks are of a plain violet-grey or pink, with here and there palm bushes and a kind of broom, which through the autumn has all kinds of colours, green, yellow, red, brown. And the brook in the foreground, white and foaming like soap-suds and further on reflecting the blue of the sky.

(*Letter* 619, *written to his Mother*)

The Ravine—it is the study done on a day of mistral—I had stacked up my easel with big stones, the picture of this is not dry, it has a closer drawing and there is more controlled passion and more colour.

That can go with another study of mountains, summer effect with a road in the foreground and a black cottage. (*Letter* 621)

To give an idea of Provence I must do some more canvases of cypresses and mountains.

The "Ravine" and another canvas of mountains, with a road in the foreground are typical of it.

And the "Ravine" especially, which I still have here because it is not dry. (*Letter* 622)

I am working on a large canvas of a ravine; the motif is quite like your sketch with the yellow tree which I still have; two masses of very heavy rocks between which a rivulet flows, a third mountain closes the ravine. These motifs have a beautiful melancholy, and besides it's fun to work in very wild places where I have nearly to bury my easel in the stones to prevent the wind from blowing everything away. (*To Bernard, letter* 20)



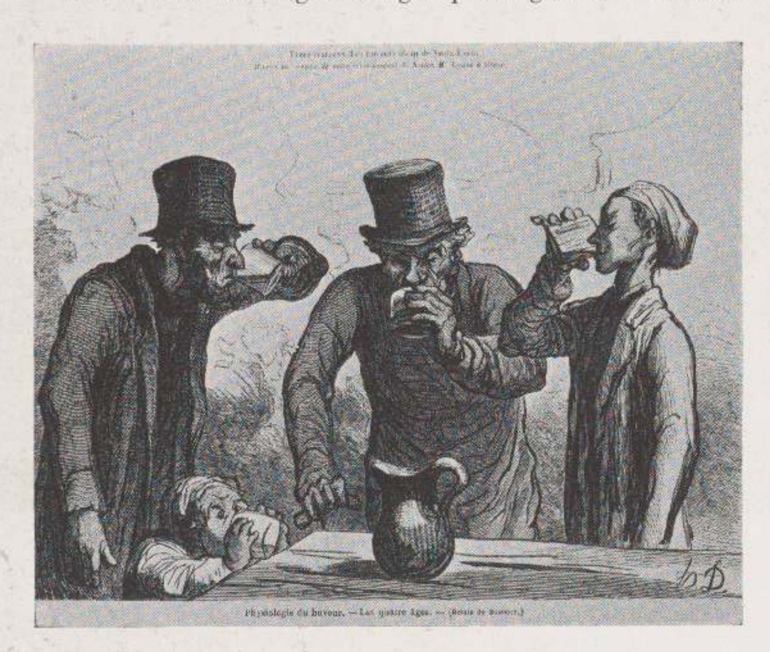
56. Men Drinking (after Daumier)

Oil on canvas, 23⅝ x 28¾ inches. Painted February, 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 667 (*Les buveurs [d'après Honoré Daumier]*)
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Winterbotham, Burlington, Vermont
Illustrated opposite

I do not hesitate to make copies. I would so like, if I had time to travel, to copy the work of Giotto, that painter who would be as modern as Delacroix, if he was not primitive, and who is so different from the other primitives. I have not however seen much of him. . . .

So what I am thinking of doing in painting is the "Men Drinking" by Daumier. . . .

(*Letter* 623)



56A. *by Honoré Daumier* Men Drinking

Wood engraving after a drawing. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Winterbotham.

57. The Reaper (after Millet)

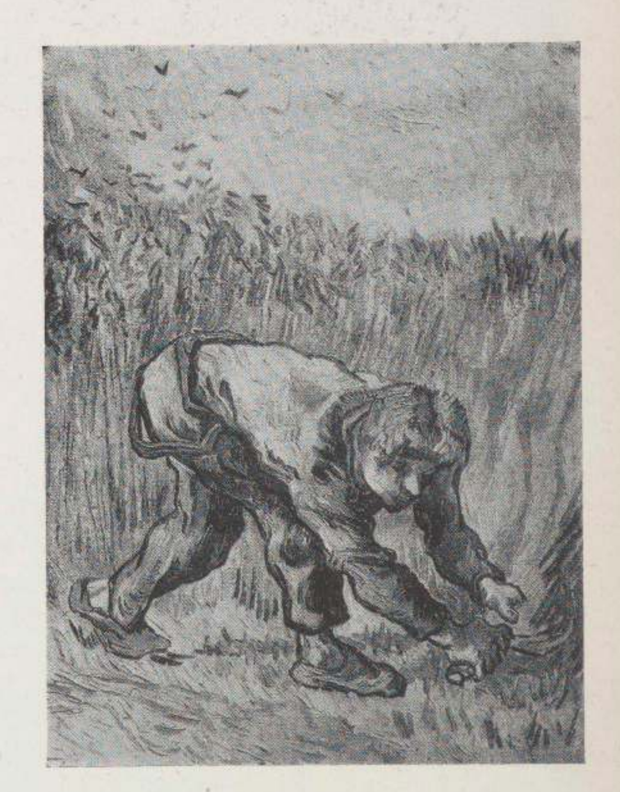
Oil on canvas, 17½ x 13¼ inches. Painted 1889-1890
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 687 (*Le moissonneur [d'après Millet]*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam. *Illustrated opposite*

I now have seven copies out of ten of Millet's "Work in the Fields."

I can assure you that it interests me enormously to make copies and having for the moment no models, it means that nevertheless I shall not lose sight of the figure.

Besides, this will make a studio decoration for me or someone else. (*Letter* 607)





58. White Roses

Oil on canvas, 28 x 35½ inches
Painted May, 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 681 (*Nature morte: roses*)
Collection Mr. and Mrs. William Averell Harriman, New York
Illustrated opposite

I have a canvas of roses on hand with a light green background. . . . (*Letter* 633)



59. Road with Cypresses

Oil on canvas, 36¾ x 29 inches
Painted May, 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 683 (*La route aux cyprès*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

I have still from down there a cypress with a star, a last attempt—a night sky with a moon without radiance, the slender crescent barely emerging from the opaque shadow cast by the earth—a star with exaggerated brilliance, if you like, a soft brilliance of rose and green in the ultramarine sky across which are hurrying some clouds. Below a road bordered with tall yellow canes, behind these the blue *Basses Alpes*, an old inn with yellow lighted windows, and a very tall cypress, very upright, very sombre.

On the road a yellow cart with a white horse in harness, and two late wayfarers. Very romantic, if you like, but Provence also I think. I shall probably engrave this as an etching. . . . (*Letter* 643)



60. Olive Trees and Mountains

Oil on canvas, 28¾ x 36 inches
Painted 1889-1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 712 (*Les oliviers*)
Collection S. van Deventer, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

The "Olives" with white cloud and background of mountains . . . are exaggerations from the point of view of arrangement, their lines are distorted as in ancient woods. The olives are more in character, as in the other study, and I tried to express the time of day when you see the green cetonias and the cicadas flying about in the heat. . . .

They will tell me that mountains are not like that and that there are black outlines of a finger's width. (*Letter* 607)

61. Ivy

Oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches
Painted 1889-1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 747 (*Sous-bois*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated

Referring to a similar composition, de la Faille Catalogue No. 609:

Here is a new canvas of 30, once again as ordinary as a chromo in the little shops, which represents the eternal nests of greenery for lovers.

Some thick tree trunks covered with ivy, the ground also covered with ivy and periwinkle, a stone bench and a bush of roses pale in the cold shadow. In the foreground some plants with a white calix. It is green, violet and rose.

The problem—which unfortunately is lacking in the chromos of the little shops and the barrel organs—is to get some distinction into it. (*Letter* 592)



62. Portrait of Mademoiselle Ravoux

Oil on canvas, 25½ x 20¼ inches
Painted June, 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 769 (*Portrait de mademoiselle Ravoux*)
Collection Mr. J. R. Oppenheimer, New York
Illustrated opposite

Last week I did a portrait of a girl of 16 or nearly, in blue against a blue background, the daughter of the people where I am staying. I have given her this portrait, but I made a variation of it for you, a canvas of 15. (*Letter* 644)



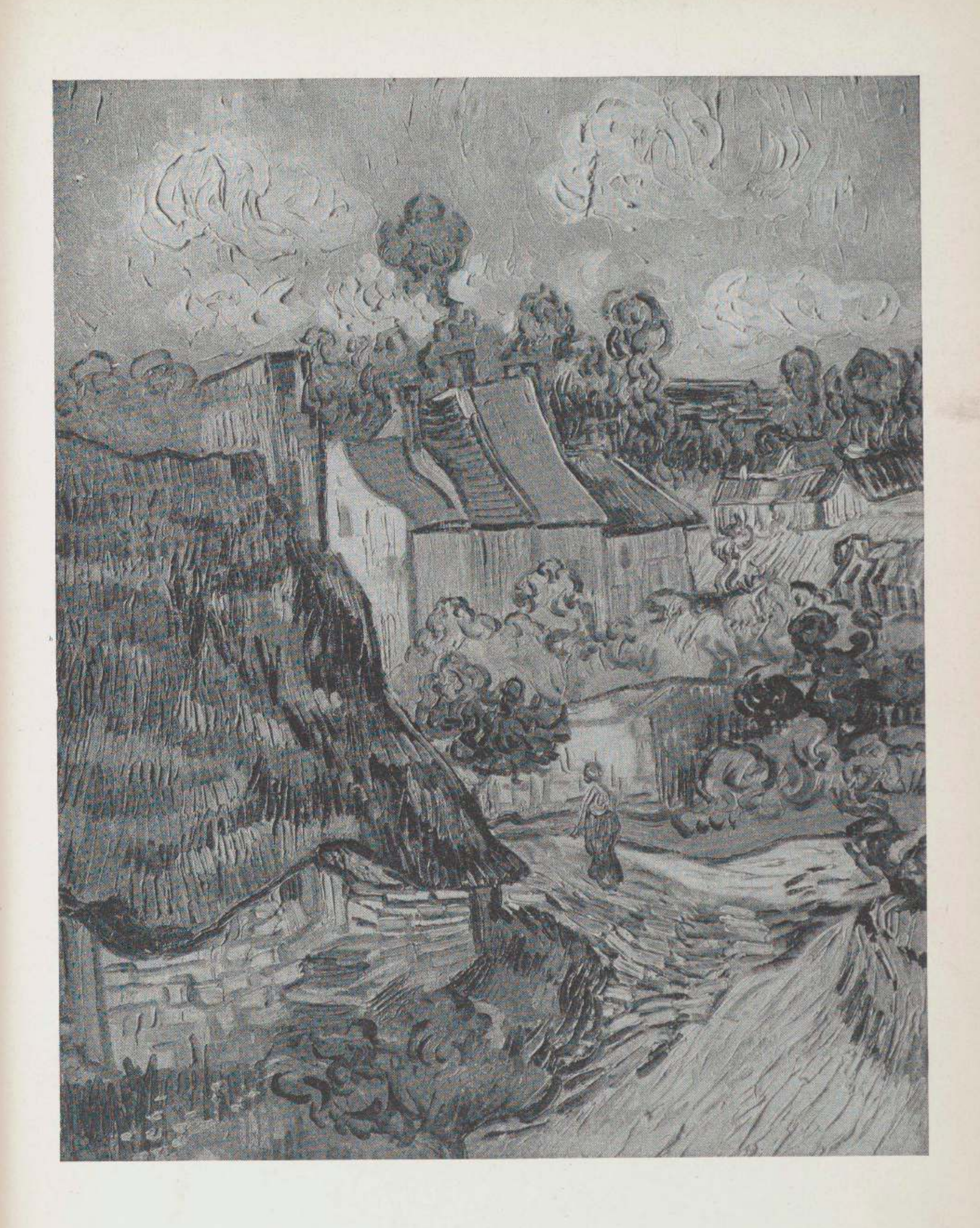
63. Portrait of Mademoiselle Ravoux

Oil on canvas, 19¾ x 19¾ inches
Painted 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 786 (*Portrait de mademoiselle Ravoux*)
Collection Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan, New York
Illustrated opposite



64. Houses at Auvers

Oil on canvas, 28½ x 23½ inches
Painted 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 805 (*Maisons à Auvers*)
Collection John T. Spaulding, Boston
Illustrated opposite



65. Three Trees

Oil on canvas, 25½ x 31 inches
Painted 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 815 (*Trois arbres*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite



66. Cornfield with Black Birds

Oil on canvas, 20¼ x 40¾ inches
Painted July, 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 779 (*Champs de blé aux corbeaux*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Illustrated opposite

There—once back here I set to work again—though the brush almost slipped from my fingers, and knowing exactly what I wanted, I have since painted three more big canvases.

They are vast stretches of corn under troubled skies, and I did not need to go out of my way to try to express sadness and the extreme of loneliness. I hope you will see them soon—for I hope to bring them to you in Paris as soon as possible, since I almost think that these canvases will tell you, what I cannot say in words, the health and strengthening that I see in the country. (*Letter* 649)

by J. P. Russell

67. Portrait of Vincent van Gogh

Oil on canvas, 23⅝ x 17¾ inches
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Illustrated on page 16

by Paul Gauguin

68. Van Gogh, Painter of Sunflowers

Oil on canvas, 28¾ x 35¾ inches
Painted at Arles, 1888
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Not illustrated

Have you seen that portrait that he made of me, painting the sunflowers? My face has after all brightened up a lot since, but it was very like me, very tired and charged with electricity as I was then.



Drawings, watercolors and prints

Belgian Period

69. Miner with Shovel

Ink, crayon and black lead touched with wash, 9¾ x 5½ inches
Cuesmes and Brussels period, July-August, 1879
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 827 (*Mineur la pelle sur l'épaule*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

Lately I have been at a studio again, namely at the Rev. Pietersen's, who paints in the manner of Schelfhout or Hoppenbrouwers, and has good ideas about art.

He asked me for one of my sketches, a miner type. Often I am drawing until late in the night, to keep some souvenirs, and to strengthen the thoughts raised involuntarily by the aspect of things here. (*Letter* 131)

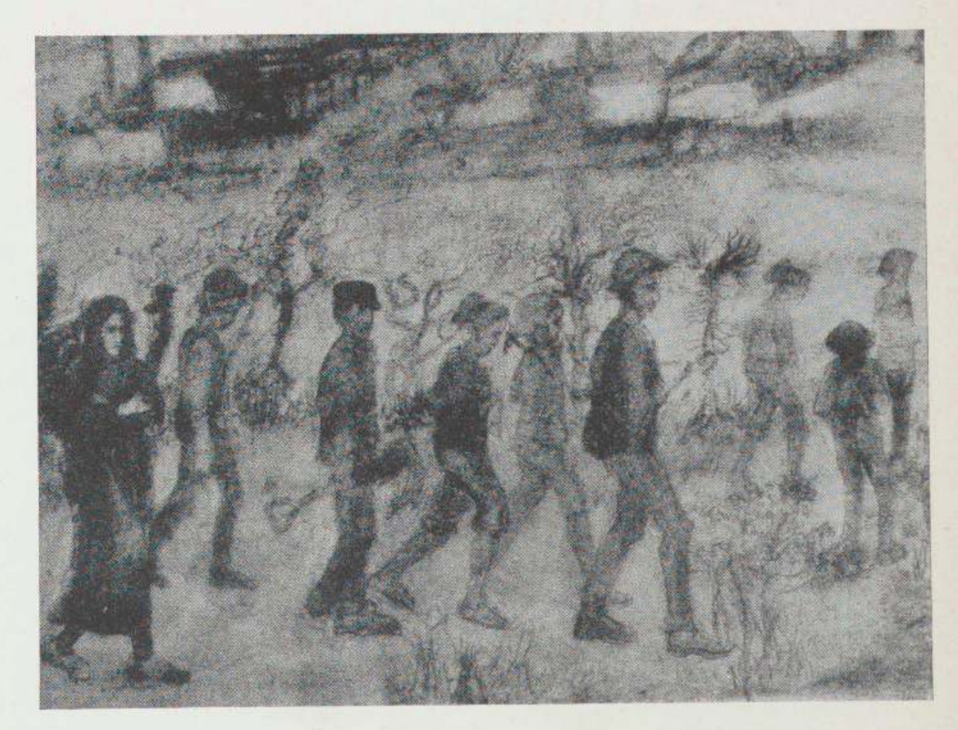
70. Miners

Black lead touched with color, 17⅜ x 21¼ inches
Cuesmes and Brussels period, August, 1880
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 831 (*Les sclôneurs et les sclôneuses*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

I have sketched a drawing representing miners, men and women, going to the shaft in the morning through the snow, by a path along a hedge of thorns; shadows that pass, dimly visible in the twilight. In the background the large constructions of the mine, and the heaps of clinkers, stand out vaguely against the sky.

I send you a hasty sketch, so that you can see what it is like. But I feel the need of studying the drawing of figure from masters like Millet, Breton, Brion, or Boughton, or others. What do you think of the sketch, do you think the idea good? (*Letter* 134)





71. Dead Woman

Black crayon and watercolor, 13⅜ x 24¼ inches
Cuesmes and Brussels period, 1879-1880
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 841 (*Femme sur son lit de mort*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Illustrated opposite*

Written from Amsterdam, May, 1877, about two years before this drawing was made:

When I was standing beside the corpse of Aerssen the calmness and dignity and solemn silence of death contrasted with us living people to such an extent, that we all felt the truth of what his daughter said in her simplicity: "He is freed from the burden of life, which we have to carry on still." (*Letter* 98)

72. Carpenter

Black crayon, 9¾ x 6⅞ inches
Drawn at Etten, 1881
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 878 (*Le charpentier*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

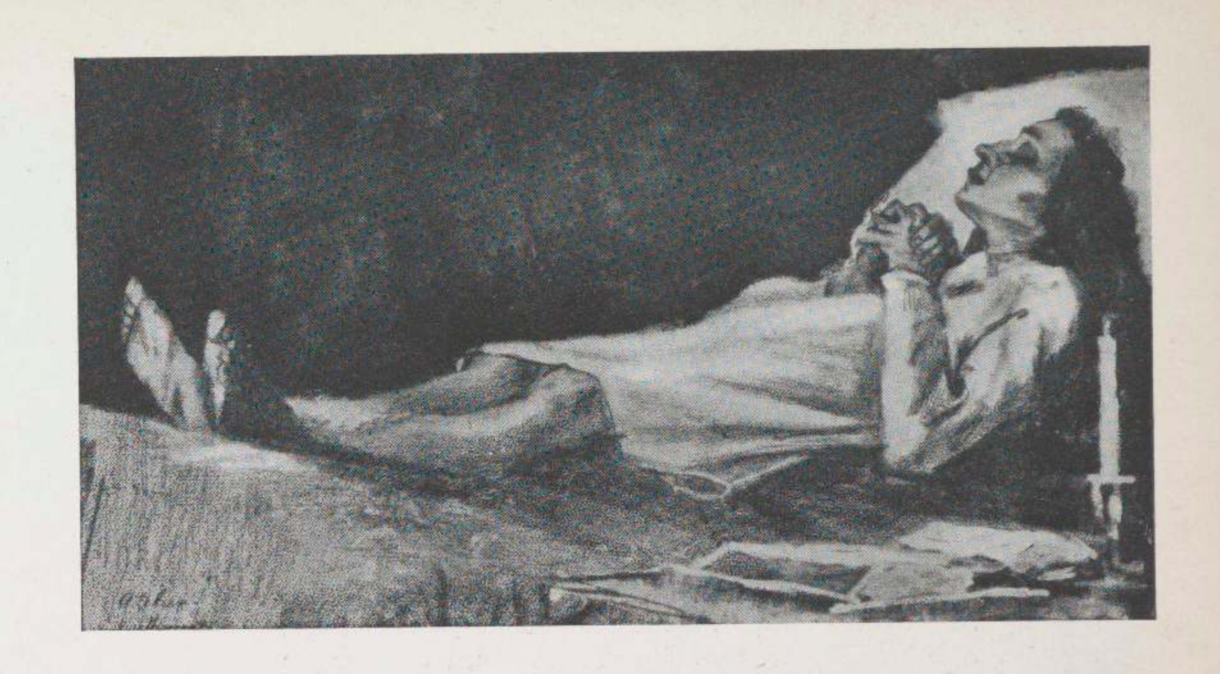
73. Mills Near Dordrecht

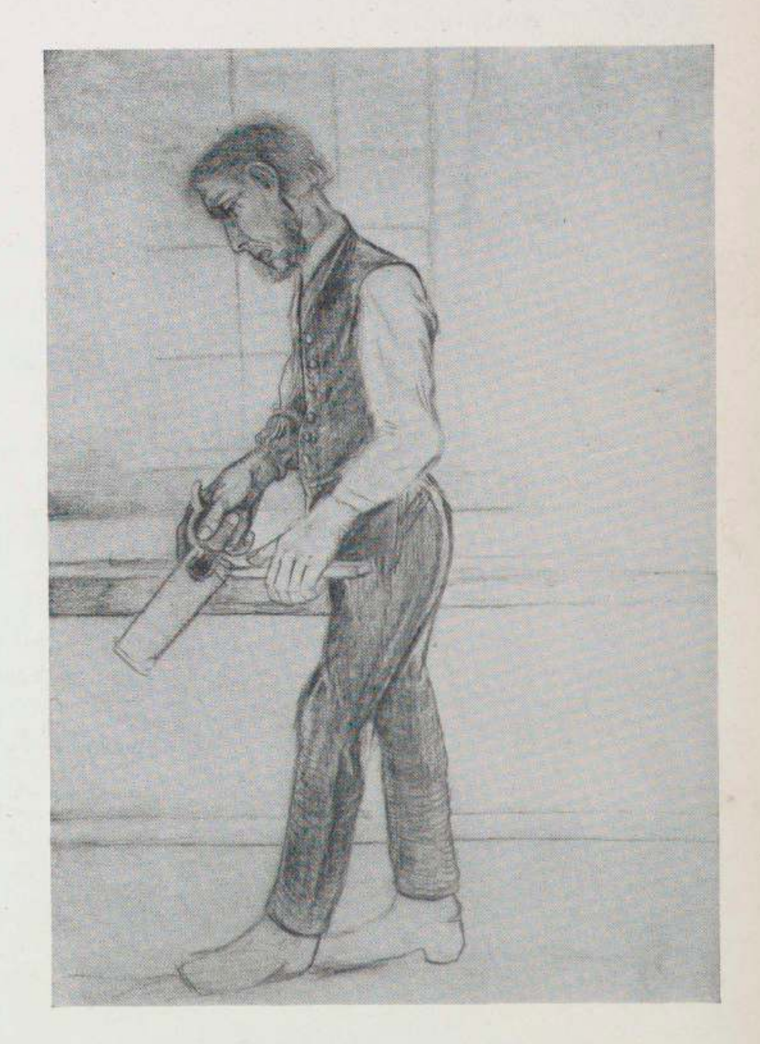
Watercolor, 10¼ x 23⅝ inches
Drawn at Etten, August, 1881
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 850 (*Les moulins près Dordrecht*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated

I stayed at The Hague until Thursday morning, then I went to Dordt, because from the train I had seen a spot I wanted to draw, namely, a row of mills. Though it was raining I managed to finish it, and so I have brought at least a souvenir from my little trip.
(*Letter* 149)

74. Woman Churning

Black crayon and watercolor, 21½ x 12½ inches
Drawn at Etten, 1881
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 892 (*Paysanne barattant*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated





75. Peasant Reading by the Hearth

Black crayon and watercolor, 17¾ x 22 inches
Drawn at Etten, 1881
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 897 (*Paysan lisant près de l'âtre*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

76. Gate-keeper's House

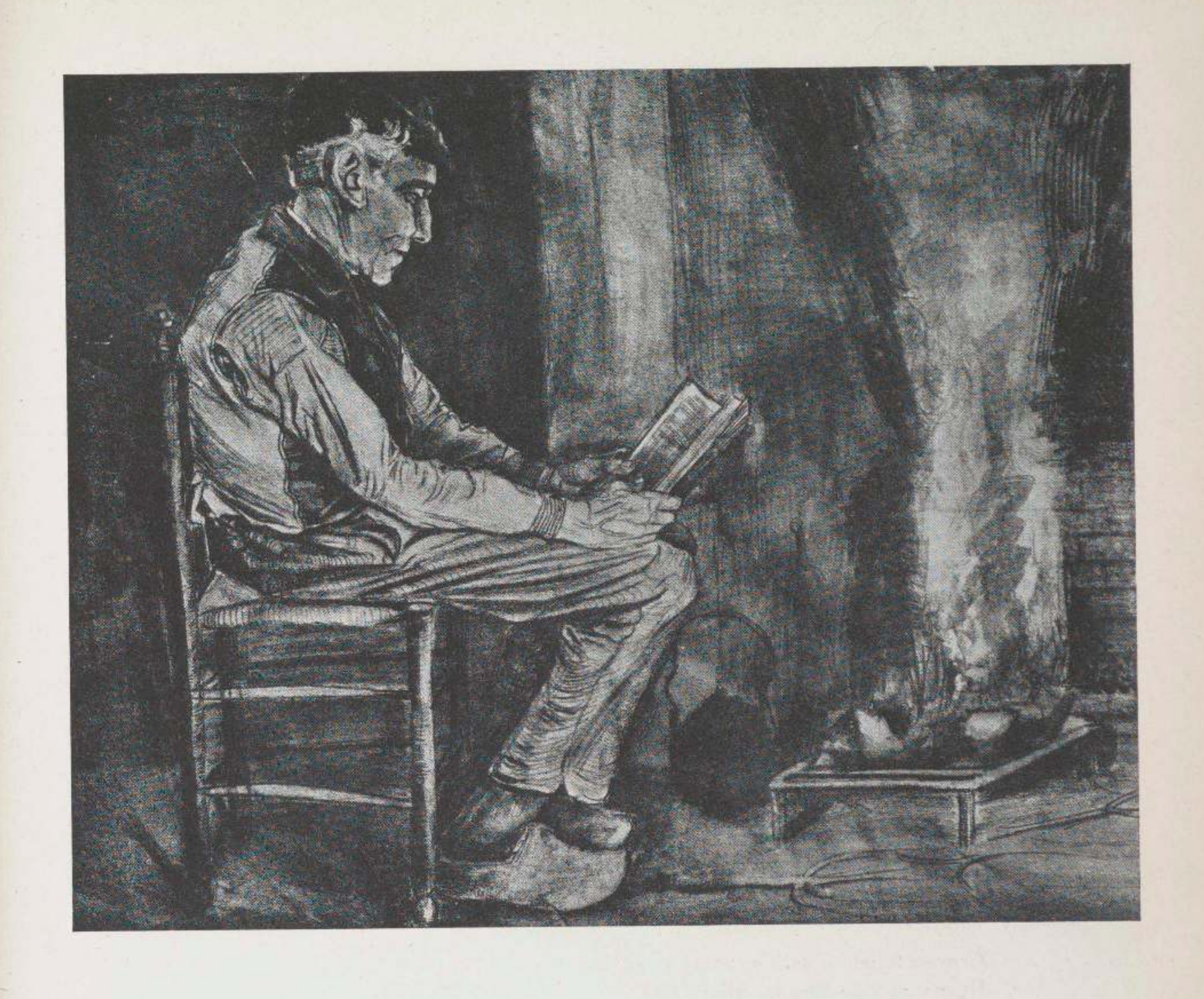
Black crayon, 17 x 22⅞ inches
Drawn at Etten, 1881
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 900 (*Maison de garde-barrière*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated

77. Canal at The Hague

Black lead and ink, touched with white, 5⅜ x 9⅝ inches
Drawn at The Hague, March, 1882
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 921 (*Route derrière la gare du chemin de fer à la Haye*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated

Theo, it is almost miraculous!!!
First comes your registered letter, secondly C. M. asks me to make for him 12 small pen drawings, views from The Hague, à propos of some that were ready. (The Paddemoes,—de Geest,—de Vleersteeg, were finished.) At fr. 2.50 a piece, price fixed by me, with the promise that if they suit him, he will take 12 more at his own price, which will be higher than mine.
(*Letter* 180)

I am again busy with the drawings for C. M. But will they please him? Perhaps not. I can conceive such drawings only as studies in perspective and I make them especially for practice in that exercise. (*Letter* 200)



78. Roots

Crayon touched with white, 19⅝ x 27 ⅛ inches
Drawn at The Hague, April, 1882
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 933 (*Etude d'arbre*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

Now I have finished two larger drawings: First, "Sorrow" . . . The other: "The Roots," represents some tree roots on a sandy ground. Now I tried to put in the landscape the same sentiment as in the figure: The clinging convulsively and passionately to the earth, and yet being half torn up by the storm. In that pale slender woman's figure as well as in the black gnarled and knotty roots, I wanted to express something of the struggle for life. Or rather because I tried to be faithful to nature, as I saw it before me, without philosophizing about it, involuntarily, in both cases something of that great struggle is shown. At least it seemed to me there was some sentiment in them, but I may be mistaken, well you must judge for yourself.

If you like them, they will perhaps be fit for your new home, and then I have made them for your birthday, for which I send you my best wishes. . . . Though "The Roots" is only a pencil drawing, I have brushed in it with pencil, and scraped it off again, as if I were painting. (*Letter* 195)

. . . Relatively few people know why an artist acts in this way or that. . . . A peasant who sees me draw an old tree-trunk, and sees me sitting there for an hour, thinks that I have gone mad, and of course laughs at me. (*Letter* 142)

79. Carpenter's Workshop and a Laundry

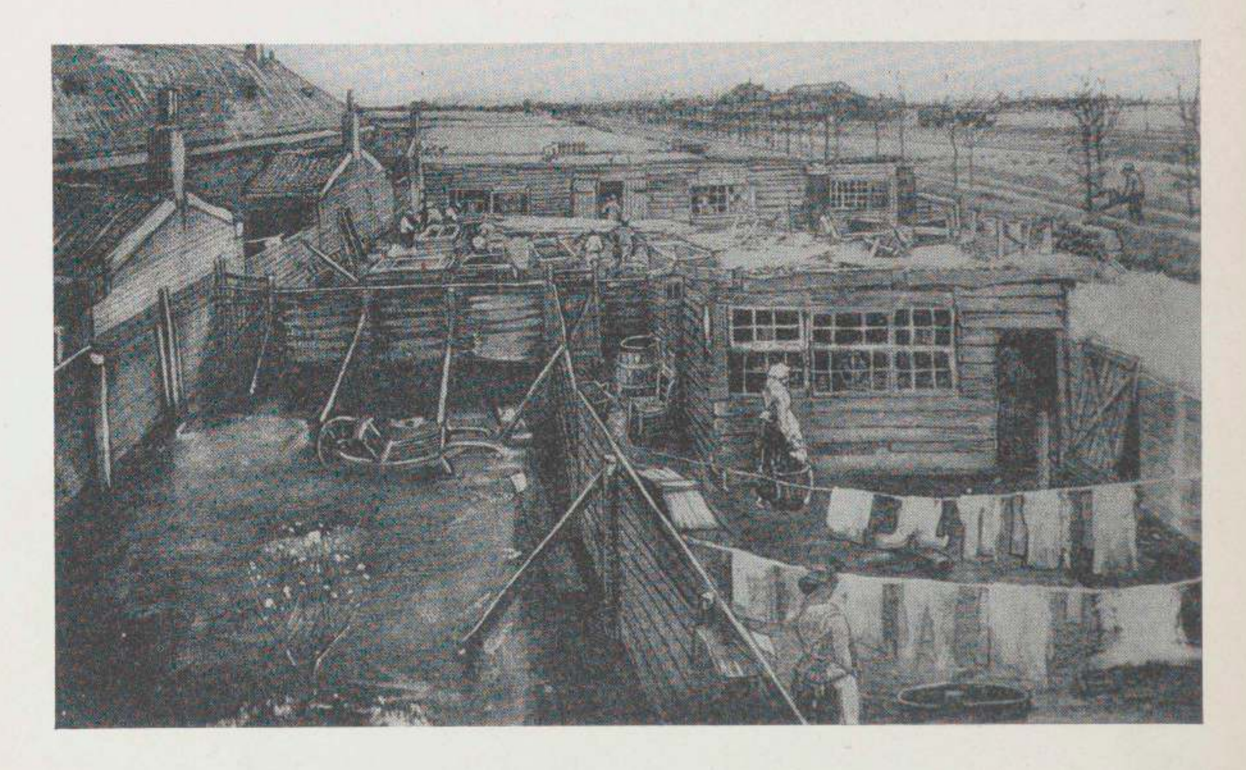
Crayon touched with white, 11 x 18⅛ inches
Drawn at The Hague, June, 1882
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 939 (*Derrière le Schenkweg*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

Written from The Hague, December, 1881:

. . . And so I have rented a studio here, that is a room and an alcove that can be arranged for that purpose, cheap enough, on the outskirts of the town, on the Schenkweg, ten minutes from Mauve. (*Letter* 166)

Today I send to you those two drawings: "Fish Drying Barn" in the dunes at Scheveningen, and "Carpenter's Workshop and a Laundry" (seen from my studio window). . . . I have tried to draw the things as naïvely as possible, exactly as I saw them before me.

. . . Rappard was greatly pleased with a similar drawing which C. M. has, and also with all the others I drew for C. M., especially the large one of the little yard. (*Letter* 205)



80. Woman Meditating

Black lead and ink, 22¼ x 15¾ inches. Drawn at The Hague, April, 1882
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 935 (*Femme en méditation*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Illustrated opposite*

81. Woman with Kettle

Black lead, 9¾ x 4¾ inches. Drawn at The Hague, 1881-1883
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1051 (*Femme portant une chaudière*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Not illustrated*

82. Woman Praying

Black crayon touched with white, 9¾ x 6⅝ inches
Drawn at The Hague, 1881-1883
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1053 (*Femme priant*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Not illustrated*

83. Peasant Woman Seated

Black crayon, 21¼ x 16¾ inches. Drawn at The Hague, 1881-1883
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1056 (*Paysanne assise*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Not illustrated*

84. Kneeling Women

Black crayon and lead, 16¾ x 11⅛ inches. Drawn at The Hague, 1881-1883
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1058 (*Deux femmes agenouillées et en prière*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Not illustrated*

85. Mother and Child

Watercolor, 15¾ x 9½ inches. Drawn at The Hague, 1881-1883
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1061 (*Soins maternels*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Not illustrated*

86. Mother and Child

Black lead, 10 x 5⅝ inches. Drawn at The Hague, 1881-1883
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1063 (*Mère assise avec son enfant*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Not illustrated*

For my part I promise you to work as hard as I can, but with models for instance it often depends on the money I have or have not in my pocket, whether I can work *full speed, half speed, or not at all.* So now I am making arrangements with a mother and her baby, but I I am afraid it will be too expensive. (*Letter* 170)



87. In Church

Water color, 10¼ x 14 inches
Drawn at The Hague, October, 1882
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 967 (*Dans l'église*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Illustrated opposite*

. . . Then I am also making one [a watercolor] of a church bench, which I saw in a little church on the Geest, where the people from the workhouse go (here they call them very expressively *orphan men* and *orphan women*).

Once again being engrossed in drawing, I sometimes think there is nothing so delightful as drawing. (*Letter* 235)

88. Old Man by the Stove

Black lead, 9¾ x 4¾ inches
Drawn at The Hague, October, 1882
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 974 (*Vieil homme se chauffant*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Not illustrated*

Speaking about orphan men, I was interrupted in writing this by the arrival of my model.

And I worked with him until dark. He wears a large old overcoat, which gives him a curious broad figure, I think you would like this collection of old men in their Sunday and in their every day clothes. . . .

He has a curious bald head, large deaf ears and white whiskers. (*Letter* 235)

89. Old Man Drinking Coffee

Black lead, 9⅞ x 5½ inches
Drawn at The Hague, October, 1882
de la Faille *Catalogue,* No. 976 (*Homme buvant une tasse de café*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Not illustrated*

I have made still more studies of the old men. . . . (*Letter* 236)

In the drawing of the "Man Who Drinks Coffee," the black has been much more broken by the direction of the hachure. Unfortunately, it has become dull now, but that can perhaps be redressed. (*Letter* 246)



90. Old Man with Patch Eye

Black lead, ink and lithographic crayon, 18¾ x 11 inches
Drawn at The Hague, December, 1882
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1003 (*Vieillard de l'hospice à l'oeil blessé*)
The Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Collection Paul J. Sachs. *Illustrated opposite*

When I wrote my last letter, I spoke to you about some large heads I had on hand.

I was just then busy making an experiment of which I can tell you the first result, as I had models for two drawings, the day before yesterday, yesterday, and today.

When I made the lithographs it struck me that the lithographic chalk was a very pleasant material and I thought, I'll make drawings with it.

There is, however, one drawback which you will understand,—as it is greasy it cannot be erased in the usual way, working on paper with it one even loses the only thing with which one can erase on the stone itself, namely the *grattoir*—which cannot be used strongly enough on the paper because it cuts through it.

But, it occurred to me to make a drawing first with carpenter's pencil and then to work in it and over it with lithographic chalk, which (by reason of the greasiness of the material) fixes the pencil, what ordinary chalk does not do, or at least very badly. Having made a sketch in that way, one can, with a firm hand, work in the lithographic chalk where it is necessary without much hesitation or erasing. So I finished up my drawings pretty well in pencil, indeed as far as possible. Then I fixed them and tarnished them with milk. And then I worked over it again with lithographic chalk where the deepest tones were, retouched them here and there, with a brush or pen, with *noir de bougie* and worked in the lighter parts with white body colour.

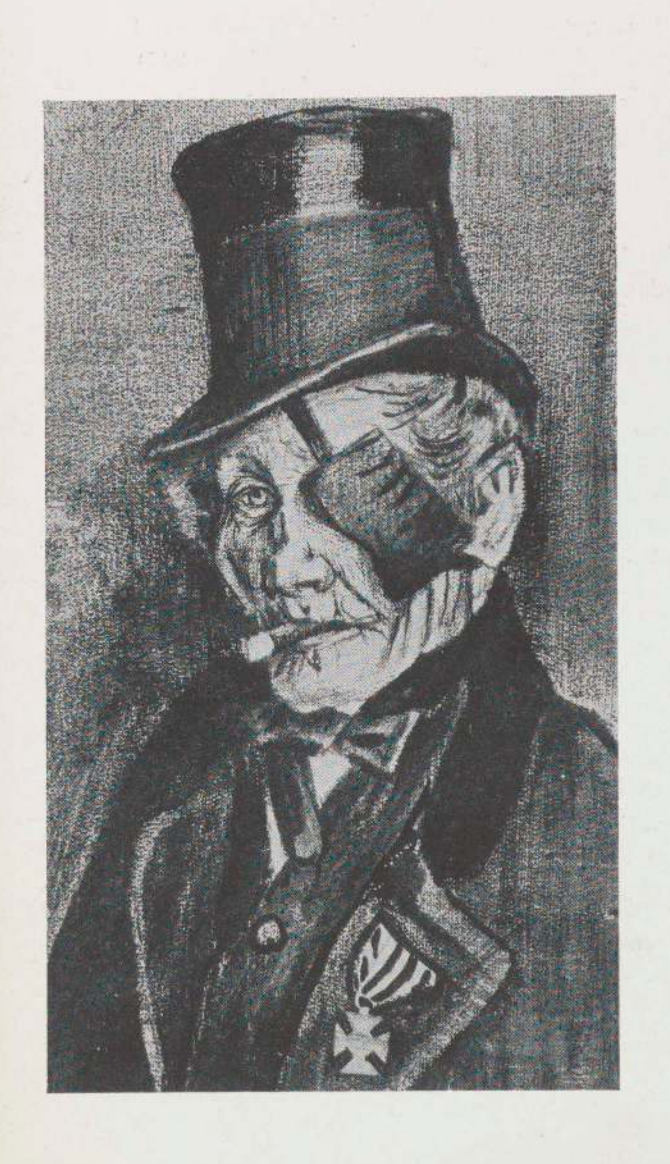
In this way I made a drawing of an old man who sits reading, with the light falling on his bald head, on his hand and the book. And the second one, the bandaged head of a wounded man. The model that sat for this really had a wound in his head and a bandage over his left eye. Just a head, for instance, of a soldier of the old guard on the retreat from Russia. When I now compare these two heads with the others I have made, there is a great difference in the power of effect. (*Letter* 256)

91. Head of Girl

Black crayon touched with white, 16½ x 9¼ inches
Drawn at The Hague, January, 1883
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1007 (*Tête de modèle*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Illustrated opposite*

. . . And the poor little girl, you see from the drawing that the former deep misery has not been wiped out, and I often feel anxious about her, but still she is quite different from last year, then it was very very bad, now she is looking more childlike already. (*Letter* 260)





92. Old Man with Bowed Head

Black crayon touched with white, 17⅜ x 18⅜ inches
Drawn at The Hague, November, 1882
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 998 (*Au seuil de l'éternité*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar

Illustrated opposite

Note: Used at Saint-Rémy as a study for a painting, *On the Threshold of Eternity*, now in the Kröller-Müller Collection

Today and yesterday I drew two figures of an old man who is sitting with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands. Long ago Schuitemaker sat for me and I always kept the drawing, because I wanted to make a better one some day. Perhaps I will also make a lithograph of it. How beautiful is such an old workman, with his patched fustian clothes and his bald head. (*Letter* 247)

93. Head of Woman

Ink, 8¼ x 5⅛ inches
Drawn at The Hague, 1881-1883
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1073 (*Tête de femme*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar

Not illustrated

94. Church

Ink and wash, 6⅛ x 4¾ inches
Drawn at The Hague, February, 1884
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1117 (*L'église*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar

Not illustrated

95. Weaver

Ink, 11 x 16¼ inches
Drawn at Nuenen, May, 1884
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1134 (*Le tisserand*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar

Not illustrated

Those people are very hard to draw, because in those small rooms one cannot take enough distance to draw the loom. I think that is the reason why so many drawings become failures. But I have found a room here where two looms are, and where it can be done. (*Letter* 351)



96. Peasant Woman Spinning

Ink, 5 x 6½ inches
Drawn at Nuenen, June, 1884
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1136 (*Paysanne filant*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated

97. Head of Peasant Woman

Ink, 5 x 4⅛ inches
Drawn at Nuenen, February-April, 1885
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1178 (*Tête de paysanne*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated

98. Head of Peasant Woman

Black crayon, 15¾ x 13 inches
Drawn at Nuenen, February-April, 1885
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1182 (*Tête de paysanne*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Illustrated opposite

99. Old Peasant Woman Sewing

Watercolor and black chalk, 24¼ x 18¼ inches
Drawn at Nuenen, March, 1885
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1221 (*Vieille paysanne raccommodant une chemise d'homme*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated

I am brooding over a couple of larger elaborate things, and if I should happen to get a clear idea of how to reproduce the effects I have in view, in that case, I should keep the studies in question here still, for then I should certainly need them for it—it is, for instance, something like this: Namely, figures against the light of a window.

I have studies of heads for it, against the light as well as towards the light, and I have worked several times already at the whole figure; winding thread, sewing, or peeling potatoes. Full face and in profile, it is a difficult effect.

But I think I have learnt a few things by it. (*Letter* 396)



100. Peasant Woman Binding a Sheaf

Black crayon, 16½ x 21¼ inches
Drawn at Nuenen, 1883-1885
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1262 (*Paysanne engerbant*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Illustrated opposite*

101. Peasant Digging

Lithograph, 20⅝ x 14⅝ inches
Drawn at The Hague, November, 1882
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1656 (*Paysan bêchant*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam. *Illustrated opposite*

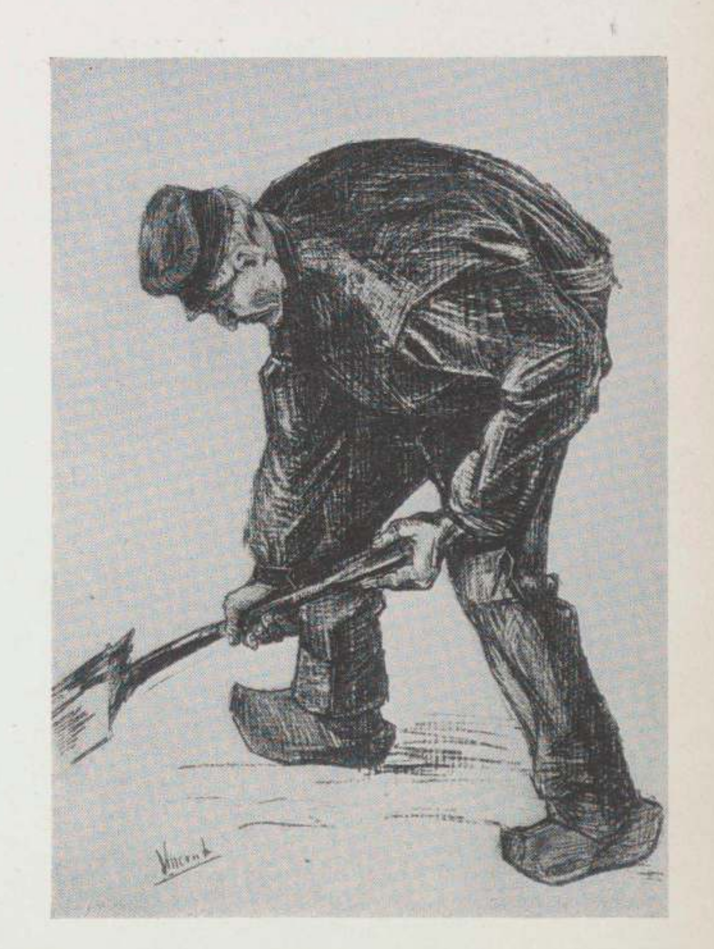
Together with this letter, you will receive the first proofs of a lithograph, "A Digger," and of a lithograph of a "Man Who Drinks Coffee." I should like to hear as soon as possible what you think of them. I intend still to re-touch them on the stone, and for that I want your opinion about them. The drawings were better. I had worked hard on them, especially on the digger, now by transferring them on the stone and by printing, several things got lost. But what I think of these prints is that there is something rough and unconventional in them that I wanted there, and this partly reconciles me to the loss of things that were in the drawing. The drawing was not done only with lithographic chalk but was touched up with autographic ink. Now the stone has only partly caught that autographic ink, and we do not know to what reason it must be ascribed, probably to the water with which I diluted it. At all events I have seen from it that where the ink caught, it gives strong black tones with which I hope to get better results afterwards. Then when the printer has more time, we will make experiments by bringing a kind of wash over it during the printing, and we will try different kinds of paper and different kinds of printing ink. I hope these two stones will still improve by the re-touch from the two studies made directly from the model which I still have. (*Letter* 246)

Now, such an enterprise as would be the drawing and printing of a series of, for instance, thirty pages of types of workmen, a sower, a digger, a wood-cutter, a ploughman, a wash-woman, then also a child's cradle or a man from the almshouse—well, the whole immeasurable field lies open, there are plenty of beautiful subjects—may one undertake it or not?— The question goes even deeper still, is it duty, and is it right or is it wrong? That's the question.

If I were a man of means I wouldn't hesitate to decide, I would say: "en avant et plus vite que ça." (*Letter* 249)

What I wanted to say is this. The idea of drawing types of workmen from the people for the people, to spread them in a popular edition, taking the whole as an affair of love and charity. . . . (*Letter* 251)




Vincent

102. Harvesting Wheat

Black crayon, 9¼ x 13 inches
Drawn at Nuenen, 1883-1885
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1301 (*La récolte des blès*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Illustrated opposite

103. Peasant Woman Binding a Sheaf

Black crayon, 16¼ x 19⅝ inches
Drawn at Nuenen, 1883-1885
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1264 (*Paysanne engerbant*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated

104. Returning from the Fields

Black crayon, 21⅛ x 13⅝ inches
Drawn at Nuenen, 1883-1885
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1268 (*Retour des champs*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated



105. Haystacks

Ink, 9½ x 12⅛ inches
Drawn June, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1427 (*Les meules*)
Collection Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York. *Illustrated opposite*

Today I am sending you three drawings by post.

The one with the ricks in a farm-yard you will think too bizarre, but it was done in a great hurry as a suggestion for a picture and it is to show you the idea. (*Letter* 498)

106. Old Peasant

Ink and reed pen, 5½ x 5⅛ inches
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1461 (*Paysan de la Camargue*)
Collection Mrs. Henry Goldman, New York. *Illustrated opposite*

Referring to the painting for which this drawing is a study:

You are shortly to make the acquaintance of Master Patience Escalier, a sort of "man with a hoe," formerly cowherd of the Camargue, now gardener at a house in the Crau. I do not think it would be an insult to the de Lautrec you have to put my peasant beside it, and I am even bold enough to hope that the de Lautrec would show still more distinguished in the simultaneous contrast, and that mine would gain by the odd juxtaposition, because that sun-steeped, sun-burnt quality, tanned with burning sun and swept with air will show up still more beside all that rice powder and elegance. (*Letter* 520)

107. View of Arles

India ink and reed pen, 17 x 21½ inches
Drawn May, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1416 (*Vue d'Arles*)
Collection Mrs. Murray S. Danforth, Providence. *Not illustrated*

Referring to the painting for which this drawing is a study:

A meadow full of very yellow buttercups, a ditch with irises, green leaves and purple flowers, the town in the background, some grey willows, and a strip of blue sky.

If the meadow is not cut, I should like to do this study again, for the idea was very beautiful, and I had difficulty to get the composition. A little town in the midst of a countryside all flowered over with yellow and purple: just—can't you see it—a Japanese dream.

(*Letter* 487)



108. Rocks

Ink and reed pen, 19¼ x 24 inches
Drawn July, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1447 (*Le rocher*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam. *Illustrated opposite*

109. View at Saintes-Maries

India ink, 9½ x 12½ inches
Drawn at Saintes-Maries, June, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1433 (*Vue à Saintes-Maries*)
Collection Jacques Seligmann and Company, New York. *Not illustrated*

Now that I have seen the sea here, I am absolutely convinced of the importance of staying in the Midi, and of absolutely piling on, exaggerating the colour—Africa not so far away. I am sending you by the same post the drawings of Stes. Maries. (*Letter* 500)

110. Cottages at Saintes-Maries

Ink and reed pen, 9½ x 12¼ inches
Drawn at Saintes-Maries, June, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1435 (*Ruelle à Saintes-Maries*)
Private Collection, New York. *Not illustrated*

I have three . . . drawings of huts. . . . They are rather harsh, but I have some more careful ones of them. (*Letter* 500)

111. Cottages at Saintes-Maries

Ink and reed pen, 11½ x 19¼ inches
Drawn at Saintes-Maries, June, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1436 (*Mas à Saintes-Maries*)
Collection Dr. F. H. Hirschland, New York. *Not illustrated*

112. Washerwomen

Ink and reed pen, 12¼ x 9½ inches
Drawn June, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1444 (*Les lavandières*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar. *Not illustrated*

Do you remember among the little drawing a wooden bridge with a washing place, and a view of the town in the distance? I have just painted that subject in a large size. (*Letter* 504)



113. Boats Anchored

India ink, 18⅞ x 23⅜ inches
Drawn August, 1888
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1462 (*Vue de rivière avec deux bateaux*)
Private Collection, New York
Illustrated opposite

I am working just now on a study like this of boats seen from the quay above, the two boats are rose-colour tinged with violet, the water is bright green, no sky, a tricolour flag on the mast. A workman with a barrow is unloading sand. I have a drawing of it as well. (*Letter* 524)

114. Weeping Tree in Grass

Reed pen and charcoal, 19⅛ x 24 inches
Drawn May, 1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1468 (*Coin de parc à Arles*)
Collection Mrs. Christine Veth, San Francisco
Not illustrated

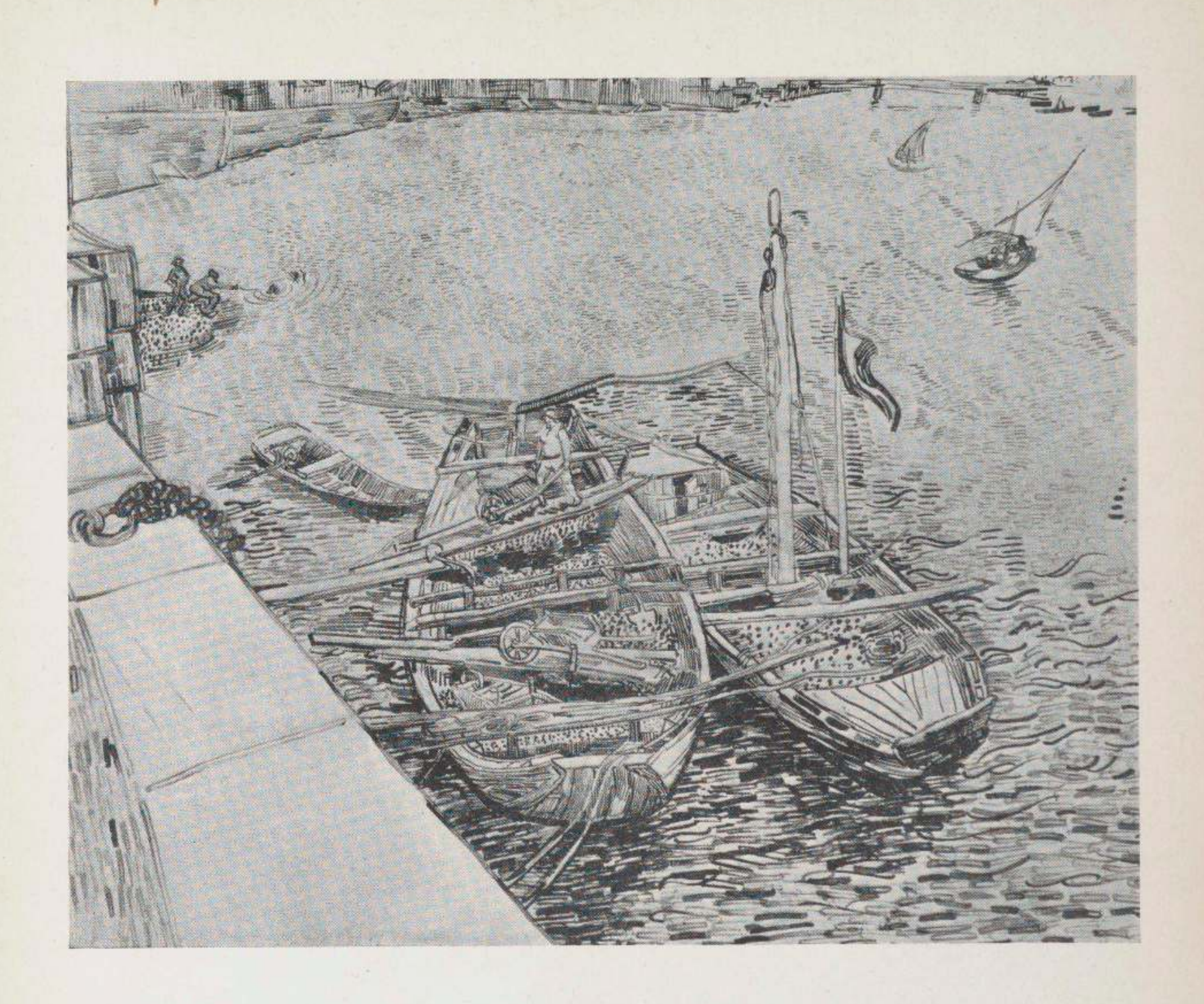
The drawings: "Hospital at Arles," the "Weeping Tree in Grass," the "Fields," and the "Olives" make a series with those old ones of Montmajour. . . . (*Letter* 595)

115. Bridge at Arles

Black crayon, 9¼ x 12¼ inches
Drawn 1888-1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1471 (*Le pont de l'Anglois*)
Collection Jacques Seligmann and Company, New York
Not illustrated

116. The Harvest

Ink, 12½ x 9¼ inches
Drawn 1888-1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1490 (*La moisson*)
Collection Wildenstein and Company, New York
Not illustrated



Arles Period

117. Corner of Orchard

India ink, black lead and violet ink, 21⅛ x 15⅝ inches
Drawn 1888-1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1516 (*Coin de verger* [*le foin*])
Collection Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan, New York
Not illustrated

Saint-Rémy Period

118. Grove of Cypresses

India ink, 24⅜ x 18⅛ inches
Drawn June, 1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1524 (*Le bosquet de cyprès*)
Collection The Art Institue of Chicago, Robert Allerton Collection
Illustrated opposite



119. Cypresses

Ink and reed pen, 24⅝ x 18½ inches
Drawn June, 1889
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1525 (*Les cyprès*)
Collection M. Knoedler and Company, New York
Illustrated opposite

120. Hospital Corridor at Saint-Rémy

Gouache and watercolor, 24¾ x 18½ inches
Painted 1889-1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1529 (*Couloir de l'hospice Saint-Pol à Saint-Rémy*)
Private Collection, New York
Illustrated opposite

121. Corner of Garden

Watercolor, 22¾ x 17½ inches
Drawn 1889-1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1527 (*Coin de jardin*)
Collection The Kröller-Müller Foundation, Wassenaar
Not illustrated





122. Fountain in the Hospital Garden

India ink, 20¼ x 18½ inches
Drawn 1889-1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1531 (*La fontaine dans le jardin de l'hôpital*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Illustrated opposite

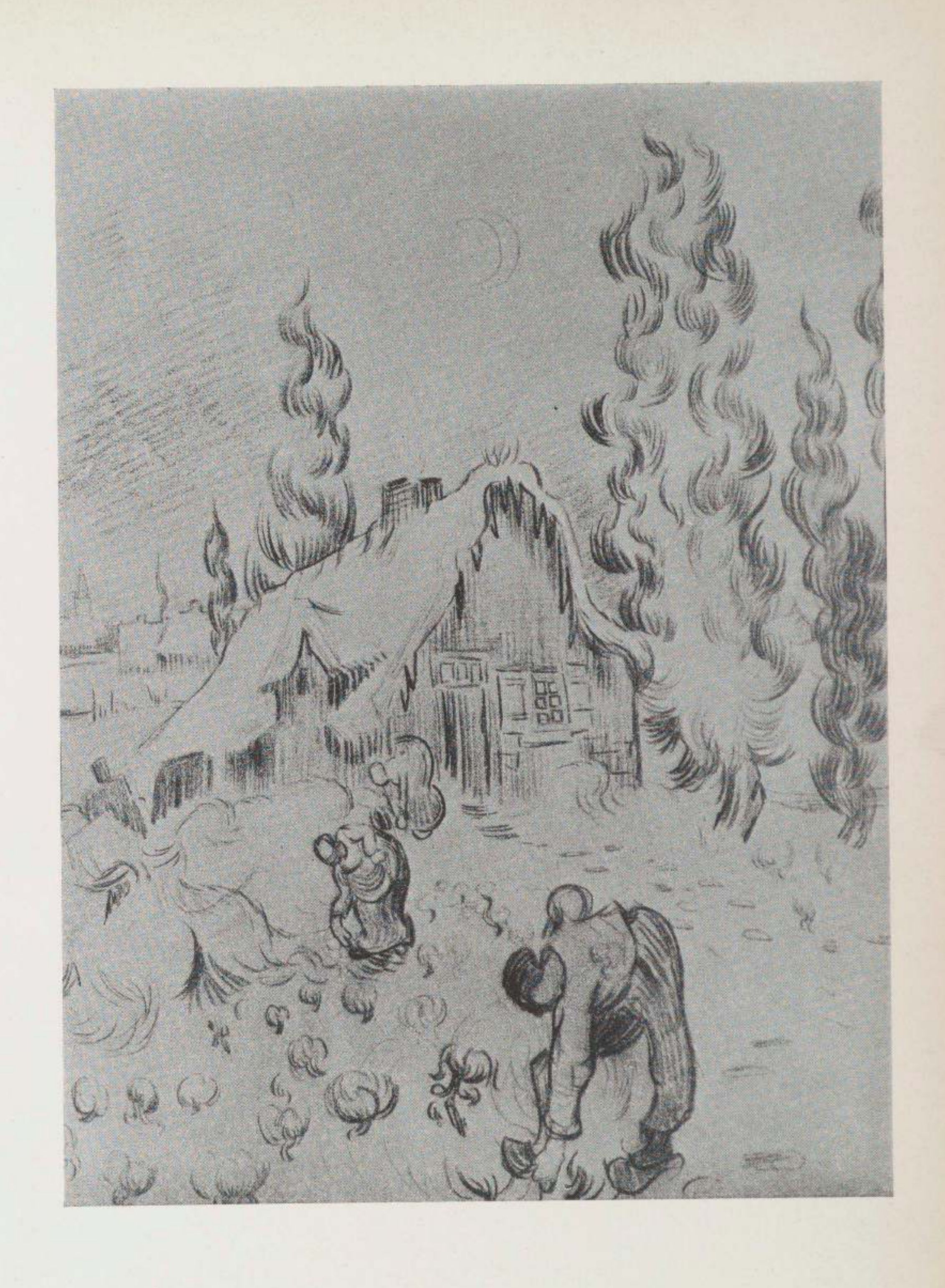
123. Cornfield

India ink and reed pen, 18⅛ x 24 inches
Drawn 1889-1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1548 (*Le champ de blé*)
Collection James W. Barney, New York
Not illustrated



124. Cottage and Cypresses

Black crayon, 12 x 9¼ inches
Drawn 1889-1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1593 (*Paysage à Saint-Rémy*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Illustrated opposite



125. Landscape with Cottages

Blue distemper and charcoal, 17¼ x 21½ inches
Drawn 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1640 (*Paysage boisé*)
Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam
Illustrated opposite

126. Landscape

Watercolor, 13 x 16½ inches
Drawn 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1625 (*Paysage*)
Collection The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Not illustrated



127. Portrait of Dr. Gachet

Etching, 7⅛ x 5¾ inches
Auvers, May, 1890
de la Faille *Catalogue*, No. 1664 (*Portrait du docteur Gachet*)
Private Collection, New York
Illustrated opposite

I have seen Dr. Gachet, who gives me the impression of being rather eccentric, but his experience as a doctor must keep him balanced enough to combat the nervous trouble from which he certainly seems to me to suffer at least as seriously as I do. . . . When he spoke of Belgium and the days of the old painters, his grief-hardened face grew smiling again, and I really think that I shall keep on being friends with him and that I shall do his portrait.

Then he said that I must work boldly on, and not think at all of what went wrong with me. (*Letter* 635)

. . . He seems very sensible, but he is as discouraged about his job as a doctor as I am about my painting. Then I said to him, that I would gladly exchange job for job. Anyway I am ready to believe that I shall end by being friends with him. (*Letter* 637)

He seems to me certainly as ill and distraught as you or me, and he is older and lost his wife several years ago, but he is very much the doctor and his profession and faith still hold him. We are great friends already. . . .

I am working at his portrait [the painted portrait], the head with a white cap, very fair, very light, the hands also light flesh tint, a blue frock coat and a cobalt blue background, leaning on a red table, on which are a yellow book and a foxglove plant with purple flowers. It has the same feeling as the portrait of myself, which I took when I left for this place.

M. Gachet is absolutely *fanatical* about this portrait and wants me to do one for him, if I can, exactly like it. I should like to, myself. He has now got the length of understanding the last portrait of the Arlésienne, of which you have one in rose; he always comes back to these two portraits when he comes to see the studies and he accepts them utterly, yes utterly, just as they are.

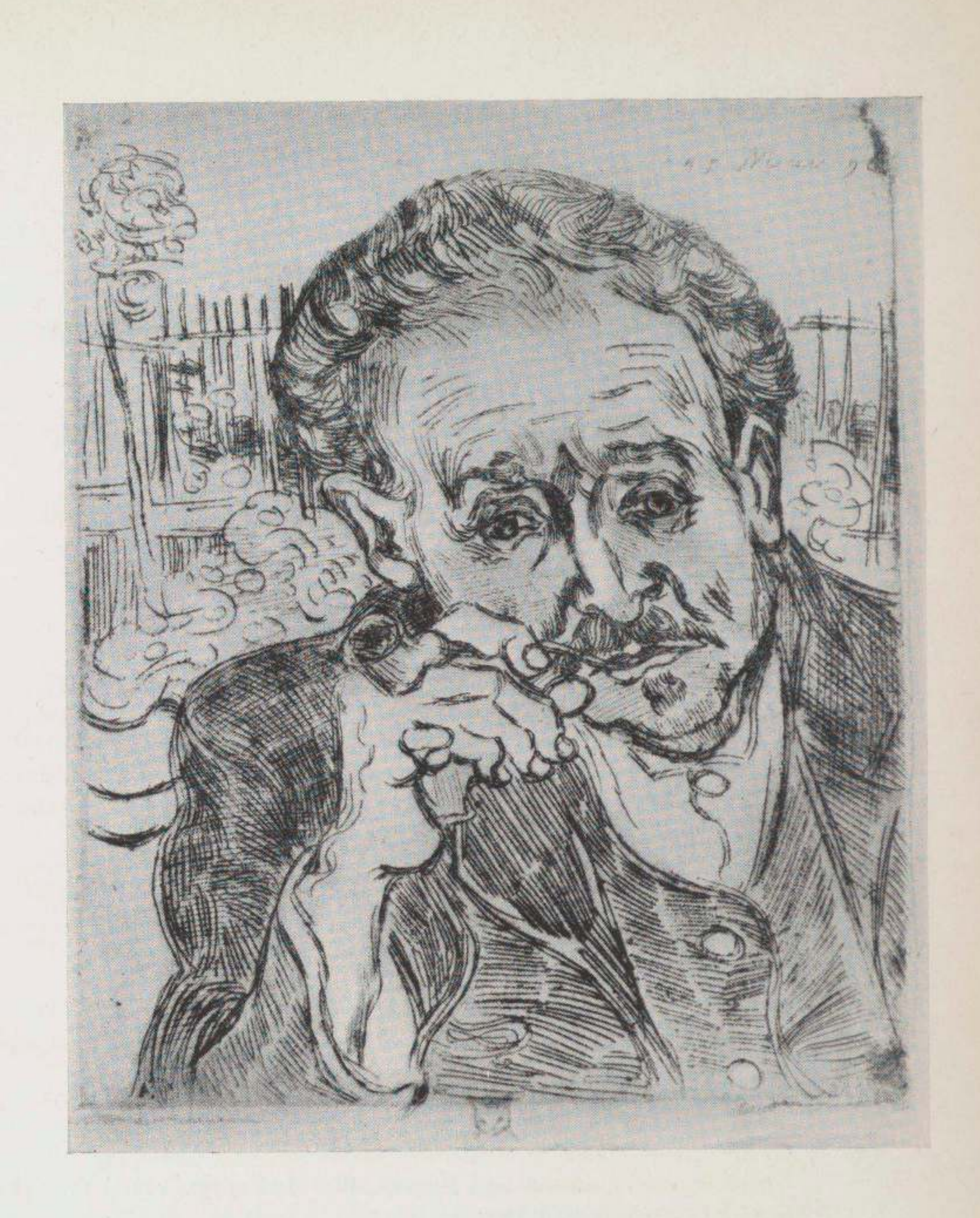
I hope to send a portrait of him soon . . . .

. . . Altogether old Gachet is very, yes very like you and me. (*Letter* 638)

I hope he [Gauguin] does some etchings of southern subjects, say six, since I can print them without cost at M. Gachet's, who is kind enough to print them for nothing, if I do them. (*Letter* 642)

From letter to Gauguin, referring to the painted portrait:

Meantime I have a portrait of Dr. Gachet with the heart-broken expression of our time. (*Letter* 643)



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